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# CHILDREN OF THE OLD MASTERS

## ITALIAN SCHOOL

ALICE MEYNELL

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# CHILDREN
## OF THE
# OLD MASTERS

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Filippino Lippi Pinx.

Walker & Cousins Sculp.

*Sacred Family.*

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# CHILDREN
## OF THE
# OLD MASTERS

(ITALIAN SCHOOL)

BY

ALICE MEYNELL

LONDON
DUCKWORTH AND CO.
3, HENRIETTA STREET
COVENT GARDEN, W.C.
1903.

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TO

THE PLAYMATES

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# CHILDREN OF THE OLD MASTERS

## INTRODUCTORY NOTE

THE making of images was, in an earlier world, so well understood to be for the sake of honour, that it was the act of homage which must needs be, by law, restrained. The picture, the statue, the doll are likenesses of things admired, and although a strange concourse of unchildlike children face us as we look at the pictures of the Masters, we are constrained to confess—seeing how his image is repeated—that these Masters admired a child, and that the populace of their centuries must have had popular admiration for a child.

It has been left chiefly for our day, and for our populace, to make an image in irony, to clothe it in burlesque, to carry it in the procession of insult. There is but one day in the year on which the people, in London, make an image, and they set it up for the sake of derision, draw it through a November fog, hoot it at the pauses of procession, and, at the end of a day of contempt, give it to the flames. It is an act of idolatry *à rebours*, an inversion of the admiring motive of human art, an act of delight in disrespect not only towards something unworshipful on earth, but towards the work of the



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maker's own hands, to which the old and general art of caricature has no real likeness. For there is no ritual about the comic paper; nor is its illustration the work of the people, leaving for a day their labour of making or carrying merchandise to make and carry a work of art. Whereas they do deride the November image with a kind of song, and it is the thing of their invention, their burden, their own, thought out and put together and prepared to its unhandsome end.

Thus the townspeople of to-day intend to tell us that they contemn—if contempt is the word—the notorious man, national enemy, or what not, and their own image of him. They do not express by means of an image what the makers love, like, or admire. But the images carried by the people of Europe in the thirteenth century and onward had no other end.

The Italian schools of painting throughout that long evolution in which they travelled a great way in mind, a great way in time, but in place shifted only from Pisa first to Bologna last, dealt less with children than with one Child. An infantine figure was the very centre of their attention; and this fact has certainly had an incalculably wide and persistent influence upon character, and therefore upon the course of history; but it was not less an effect than a cause of gentleness and civilization. Art was a matter of importance in Europe for four or five hundred years, and during those centuries the centre of art was the portraiture of a child in a woman's arms. Our own day would not suffer such a thing. Misplaced irony, and the love and fear, at once, of a quite inappropriate burlesque would forbid it. There was, then, a straightforward, a natural sentiment, now vanished, in the ages that chose this young and helpless group

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for endless repetition; albeit we call those ages violent. They had the whole Bible to choose from. The Madonna and Child look so merely a matter of course in the eyes of everyone who so much as knows the "Old Masters" by their generic name, that these modern eyes miss the impulse that once set the making of the Madonna and Child afoot. A manufacture it became, but it had a fresh beginning and a continuous sanction. The Byzantine who brought the first Virgin and Child into Italy represented what we should call in our modern way a public. In order to serve it he made these figures, in their simplicity and sentiment, the one chief preoccupation of the art of the new—the second—civilization of Europe. Yet the Crucifixion, the Descent from the Cross, the great masculine actions and compositions, were not entirely postponed by this early art. There was no hesitation, for example, as to their difficulty, inasmuch as the first mediaeval sculptor was unaware of what modern art calls difficulty; he knew that his materials must serve him, roughly, in his approach to drama, and in his use of mere symbols, alike. Assuredly he had no misgivings as to the representation of the action of a Resurrection, to be indicated in unpractised and startled stone. It was not, therefore, for the sake of material simplicity that he and the painter alike chose the Madonna and Child as the first and the permanent group. We have to ascribe their choice to the inclination of the mind of the time, first in the country through which Greek art entered central Europe, and next in the countries that followed, while they altered, the fashion of foremost Italy.

Let us grant that this love for children was less conscious, less deliberate, less meditative, and less articulate than the feeling which,

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apart from the arts, we cherish now, but we may well insist that it was more serious. It was eager to confess the Divinity of a Child; and it is well worthy of remark that art put out its hand to stay the passing of the Divine childhood. It took Goethe's word and cried to the passing moment: "Stay, thou art so fair!" And that moment was the moment of the Infancy of Christ. We are inclined, and with justice, to accuse our fathers—say our fathers of the seventeenth century and onwards—of considering childhood too hurriedly, too inconsiderately, as a passage. Had they known, we aver, of the law of unresting change, of the passage through which everything living, and even the inorganic creature, journeys alike; had they known that the very crystals have to grow old, they would not have been urgent, impatient, and in haste with childhood, as they certainly were, because it is but a state of transition; they would not have seen the character of transitoriness, which is everywhere, exclusively in human childhood, and would not have reproached the innocent child with what is the universal lot. They thought great things of their own maturity, and hurried their children on to that state which is, after all, so brief that it hardly stays long enough to be known. It is wonderful that they should have been thus hasty with childhood, and so pushing to get it done, so ill-content with the state of the infancy of their children, in the age in which Reynolds painted the "Strawberry Girl," and later when Blake was writing. For the genius of the painter and the poet had an incomparable apprehension of childhood.

One age, then, there was, so little impatient of childhood as to make perpetual that childhood on which the attention of its art was fixed. The Infancy of Nazareth was to last for ever. We must not

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*Anderson*

GIOVANNI BELLINI. MADONNA AND CHILD
(VENICE)

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forget the certain fact that while the painters of the early schools made pictures of the Child in the Virgin's arms they prayed to the Child himself as though he had never grown older. The infancy they worshipped was to them a permanent mystery. They were indeed in no haste to have it over. If we often find in the fifteenth-century and the sixteenth-century Bambino a lack of that which we call infantine, we must not forget that the painters intended to paint an infant. A very "fine" one in the first place. No gossips at a christening were ever so eager over the fatness of a babe as were the masters. And while they intended to paint an infant, it must not be a child new-born. They would not have him wrapped in swaddling-clothes and a few hours old, but a full six months old and with bared limbs, proved to be the finest child "in twenty parishes round." There is a Bambino of Giovanni Bellini, in the Brera Gallery of Milan, in whom, at a year old or so, there appears a definite sadness, with the signs of fretting disease in the droop of the rounded cheeks—the cheeks of the thinnest baby are round, but the little spheres are flaccid; so are they in Bellini's Bambino, and the limbs are helpless with fatigue. But this is a rare exception. We may take all this vaunting of the fine child in the Italian school as a simplicity, or else as a lack of delicate feeling. Children appeal to us by a variant of the quality of pathos; for a certain time men and women loved them best when they were to die like little Dombey. That temper is past; but we, to-day, find a child who is to live, at least as pathetic as the readers of Mrs. Beecher Stowe found a child who was to die; and assuredly ours is the blacker humour, the more ill-conditioned melancholy; but it is, with differences, all one pathos together, and modern. The fourteenth century

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and after loved a child (in the natural manner) the better for being high in health and full in flesh.

And yet, after all this apology, I have to confess how seldom childlike is the Italian Old Masters' child. The collection in this volume represents in chief part the exceptions. Rarely and most beautifully, a purely infantile child—Bambino or angel—more rarely a little Virgin, and almost as rarely a portrait—shows how suddenly a master perceived the real character of childishness amid the conventions of his time and of his art. The Della Robbias, sometimes Botticelli, and Titian in one great example—these gave the childish look and the childish action of which they were aware, one hardly knows how, seeing that both were before the eyes of other masters unperceived. Even through Raphael's preoccupation of grace, which has inspired all dancing masters these many, many years down to Alfred de Musset's *maître à danser*, when he told his maiden pupil that she must turn her head over the right shoulder when her feet went skimming to the left, and over the left shoulder when they had to speed to the right: "But, that way, I shall fall," says the *jeune fille*; "But no," he replies, sketching with agility a *chassé*, "Look at me, I don't fall"; even, I say, through Raphael's attitude, destined to so speedy and so long and so Italian a platitude and commonplace, a perception of the attitude of childhood breaks at times like a natural action. But not once did it appear to his followers. The slight corruption of the Raphaelesque attitude was one of the easiest corruptions in the history of corruptible art. It suited every tendency of the Latin mind and the whole school of ornament. Rome, Bologna, and the later Venice improved upon the child of Raphael, used him for the very structure of

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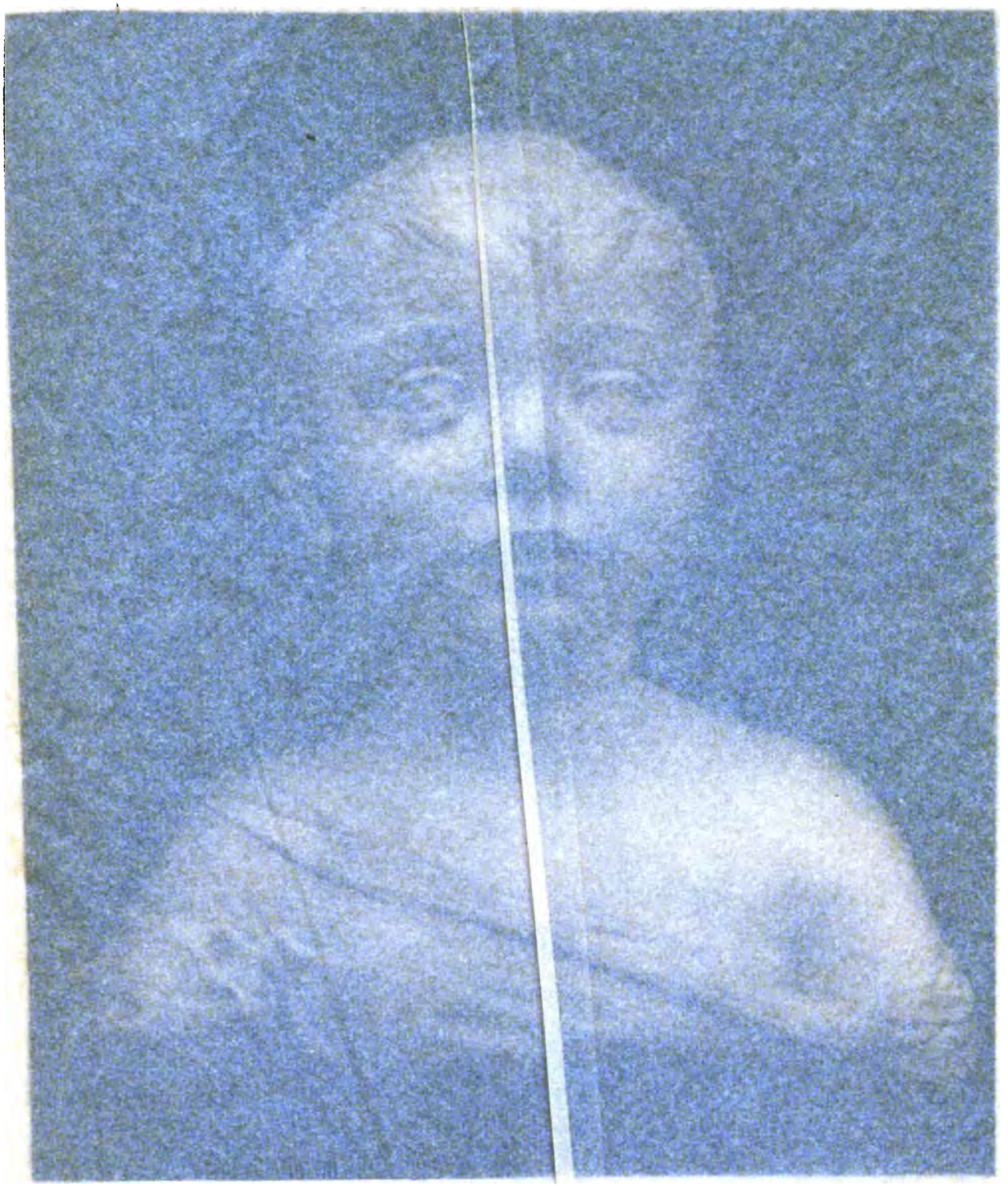

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I have to confess how seldom child. The collection in the ceptions. Rarely and never ino or angel—even Correggio, Raphael, and almost as rarely Titian—shows how seldom it really perceived the real character of childishness amid the conventions of his time and of his art. The [illegible] Robbia, sometimes Donatello, and Titian in one great example, have given the childish look and the childish action of which [illegible] are capable; one hardly knows whether it is through Raphael's preoccupation with grace, which has changed the dancing maenads from [illegible] into [illegible] or whether it is because the [illegible] people that Donatello knew had not the right attributes when his successors [illegible] left, with [illegible] the [illegible] which [illegible] "But, dear me, I shall not [illegible] the point. [illegible] the child being [illegible] a child. I shall always [illegible] [illegible] way, through Raphael's influence, [illegible] to an [illegible] and an Italian [illegible] and [illegible] [illegible] fade of childhood [illegible] [illegible] did it appear to his followers. [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

*Head of a Child.*

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decorative composition—his curves, especially the bow of his young figure, which supports the canopies of thrones, not manifestly, as it was done by caryatides, but entirely by way of attitude and composition. But for the plastic art—for the exquisite art of Luca and Andrea della Robbia—a collection of children of the Italian schools would have lacked much.

The Bambino, the boy St. John, the little angel who hauls his brother by the hand in the "Last Communion of St. Jerome," with all their kind, and the Loves of Titian's "Garden" with theirs, are of course men-children. The woman-child is much neglected; but for a little Virgin at the knee of St. Anne, or a legendary Presentation of the Child Mary in the Temple, one might look long for a little girl. Chaucer seems to allot some of the economy of his tenderness to the little daughter of Griselda; but soon he makes her masquerade as a bride at twelve years old: and this was their way, in those days, in earnest, of suppressing the girl-child; they married her out of the way of danger.

"Have here again thy little youngë maid."

Chaucer's exquisite line, and the tenderness of the poem "Pearl," must stand for the scantling of literary allusion to the woman-child of these many ages.

In a word, the thirteenth, fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries had a sentiment of their own for childhood, somewhat unlike each other's, together very different from ours. We might be slow to accuse them, whether of error or defect, seeing that they cannot accuse us again. Nor had they the experience of our older age, nor the choice of spirits that lies before us. They were not aware

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of the turn human emotions were to take, and doubtless if they had speculated they would never have guessed prophetically at anything like the child of Reynolds, or the child of Wordsworth, the child of the Sunday-school, the child of Mrs. Turner's moral tales, the child of Dickens, or of Thackeray, or of the American diarist, or of the naturalist who showed how the new-born could hang by their hands.

The children of the Italian masters for the greater part are such as the prejudice of the time would have them, graceful according to an adult ideal, fat and well-liking, and as beautiful as the hand could make them when the eye had not learnt to condescend frankly to the conditions of their life, whether in form or in action. The Greeks had been most reluctant to recognize the true form—the proportion, for instance, the relative size of the head and the relative length of upper and lower limbs. The Italians confessed the characteristic form, but clung to their own *banal* idea of grace, the grace that carries the head aside, the grace of the dancing-master; and imposing this upon the ultra-childish fat, the exaggerated infancy, the rolling limbs, of their *bimbi*, they created a little corpulent artificial figure, not like a man, not like a child, the pet of the ages that brought mediaeval Rome to the ground by the pickaxe, and set the seal of one style upon the city and world. It is difficult to associate the painting of Angelico or that of Benozzo Gozzoli with the neo-classic architecture; insensibly we place the painters further back, a step nearer to the Gothic, than the builders. We do so, that is, in regard to their Madonnas, to their Apostles, Evangelists, Martyrs, and Doctors; in these there is the upright spirit—they are "early." Thus the arts are at odds, or look so, as to "periods." But that

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impression disappears when we attend only to the Bambino. Here is full "Renaissance." The Bambino goes well with the classic temple of the academy, with the portico and the pediment, even the broken pediment; he is of their time.

Amid so many little boys wearing their make-believe childhood in the posture of indirect grace that living childhood never assumed —a posture conceived in the adult mind before it was assigned to any picture-child; amid so many falsified little boys, stand the smaller number of authentic children. They may be gathered *un peu partout* from all the schools of Italy early and late; Florence yields them in the fourteenth century and Venice in the sixteenth. The grace of life, as it were something unexpected, puts out its impulsive and simple arms, or a laugh breaks through. We find again the child whom the painters had a little outdone or a little altered for their art, but whose own incomparable charms meanwhile had never flagged. It had doubtless been dear to women, in private, outside of the schools, renewing itself in the freshness of the repetitions of human generations. If the thrush sings each song twice over, with the "careless rapture" note for note rehearsed, his indomitable little fathers had sent the same song afloat, with the same impulse of invention, in the course of centuries. Nor do the sallies of kittens change, and doubtless the sacred antics of the spirited Egyptian imp in ambush that is now a mummy were those which the kitten tries to-day under the spur of an old but unpremeditated joy. Children in like manner recapture and recapture the outbreak of their smiles and their fresh ingenuities of play. And the Italian master who has moulded his bambino heavily, creased his legs and puffed his cheeks



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so as to make him very much a child—a fine one, and has turned his neck, disposed his legs, and raised his eyes so as to make him something more elegant than a child; the same master, I say, sees at another moment the sweetness of the truth, and his efforts and prejudices are set aside. Could there be a better example of this repentance than we may see in the work of Raphael?

It may be necessary to say that the slight essay following is not a work of art-criticism, and less—if less could be—an historical study. It does but record some of the changes of sight and spirit, during the course of the five centuries of Italian art, in the contemplation and representation of childhood. It is therefore an essay on a subject of the designs of certain painters and sculptors, and not on their workmanship.

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# THE CHILD OF EARLY ART

IN the ages that, since the Renascence, have been called dark, the scanty art knew but one Child, but this was virtually the first child in art—the first prevalent child. Whether we hold the art of the time between the fall of the Roman Empire and the entry of Byzantine art into Italy—the time that is darkened by the smoke of the destruction, and the dust of the demolition, of Rome—to be the last art of the antique world or the first of the modern world; a seed-pod or a bud; an art rigid, grave, and inexpert with exceeding youth, or bearing those characters because of extreme age; we find it separated from the past, and allied to the future, by the motive of its effort, by its desire, by what we call in our loose language its subject. That subject was chiefly the child-Christ in the arms of his Mother. When the linear arts came out of hiding in the Catacombs they came with this burden and for the sake of this. Learning has not said its last word as to the female figure so often traced on the subterranean wall—whether the "Orante" was a symbolic woman or a Madonna; she has no child. But about the woman with a child there is no doubt. A half-effaced fresco in the Catacomb of Priscilla has a singular, natural, vivid, well-observed Child glancing suddenly round from his Mother's breast with animated eyes—

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"falcon eyes," an Italian writer calls them; and this is from an early hour of the dark ages, and a mere scratch in a dark place. Since this Catacomb design has still a spirit, a vitality, a dramatic impulse that relate it to antiquity, then it is in these places of Christian sepulture that the old art lived its latest unmistakable life, and then passed into that ambiguous state I spoke of but now. For the falcon-eyed child is conjecturally of the early part of the third century, thirteen hundred years, that is, before Raphael; Raphael has much the same action in the "Madonna della Seggiola." It would be too much to say that, except in sculpture, this vitality of childish movement lapsed during those thirteen centuries, passed, in linear art, from the nameless hand of the Christian in the Catacomb into the glorious hand of Raphael on the summits of sixteenth-century Rome; but it might almost be said. For in the pre-Raphaelite painted Bambini there is something less quick, less instant, than in the little head of the Catacomb of Priscilla, and in the little head of Raphael's picture.

The rest of the Catacomb designs are, as has been said, ambiguous, between two worlds; the rigidity of weakness is in them; the proportion of childhood is lost—for let us add to the strange honours of the Priscilla drawing this fact—that the size of the Child's head is there according to nature. After this the Catacomb designs keep their "dark-ages" character. Moreover, from a Roman tomb of an even earlier date than that of the Catacomb Child—the vault of a tomb of the first or second century—we have slight sketches in relief, amongst which is a child; he is exceedingly young, and springs, seated, as a child who cannot walk springs on his nurse's arm; but

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this child is driving a dragon, and doing it with spirit and with shouting. He is perfectly childish in proportion, a large-headed, animated boy, for whom some baby sat, in the time of Trajan, leaping at some vigorous fancy of his own. This work, by the way, is so skilful, as bas-relief, that we cannot rank it with the equivocal early Christian drawing; this dragon-driver and all the other work from the same tomb is decidedly late-antique, and not early-modern; it is only the Christian art that bears the twilight character—twilight of nightfall or of daybreak?—in its seclusion.

Next come the majestic mosaics of the Byzantine churches, from the sixth-century Madonna and Child in the Basilica of Sant' Apollinare Nuovo, at Ravenna, to the beautiful twelfth-century Madonna and Child of the Duomo of Torcello. Majestic, indeed, are they, albeit not only ignorant but weak, barbaric in the early examples, and loaded—the crowned woman and the crowned doll-child—with ornaments as rigid as their eyes; but all-noble at their worst and best. It is only at the close of these ages that notes on Italian schools should properly begin. The Italian schools grew from the Byzantine in Italy; and they had there a great origin. The Renascence, if we give the name to this evolution of an art, was no sudden thing. Imperceptibly the art of the alien mosaic passed into the art of national painting. Cimabue made, if one may say so bold a thing, very little difference. That his Madonna was portable may have been, after all, the chief cause for the carrying in procession; that he "held the field" in Florence may have been chiefly by reason of his Florentine citizenship. At Siena, in the same Tuscan country, Cimabue had contemporaries and equals. Margaritone d'Arezzo was

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born some twenty-five years earlier than he, and was hardly that quarter of a century more Byzantine. Duccio di Buoninsegna, whose "Madonna and Child," with contemplative angels, has at least as much as Cimabue's flexibility, followed him closely in time. And Duccio's angels, leaning on their hands on the back of the Madonna's throne to look at her Child and her, have a quiet drama of attitude and look, as full of promise as the best action of the attendant angels of Cimabue. The Child of all these first masters of Italy has the arbitrary proportions, the erect attitude of the time, the aspect of a strange small man, which was, let us remember, as far as we know, the fiction that Greece herself approved. Cimabue places him on his mother's arm, rather than on her knee, but, needless to say, with no weight; one hand is raised in the action of the Papal blessing—three fingers up to represent the Holy Trinity. Cimabue does not give child-angels to the Bambino for companions; none of his angels, I think, can be said to be children.

When we pass from the mere image of the Virgin and Child to the representation of the Nativity, art becomes, in a certain degree, dramatic. Inasmuch as it "illustrates," the criticism of our day would call it literary; but it is not more literary than life is literary. The plastic and linear arts have to do with all that the eyes can see; that is their large province: expression, action, significant attitude, moral beauty and intellectual beauty in their aspect, passion in its aspect; all these as well as decoration. The great schools had no doubts as to this matter. And the art that was not yet a school, and hardly still, or hardly yet, an art at all, fumbled at the scene of action, even in the Catacombs. In the acrosolium of one of the dark galleries of the

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Catacomb hard by the basilica of Saint Sebastian, on the Appian Way, is a little painting of a wooden bench, upon which lies the child-Christ, swaddled, with two animals at his side. This is conjecturally of the fourth century. It is the first "Nativity." In regard to the character of art it is the first, and Correggio's "Notte" is among the last. For after Parma and Venice art ceases to go on a steadfast, confident and coherent way; it breaks as a thread of water breaks into drops. Virtually, if not in actual date, Correggio was the latest of the great. He showed plainly the corruption of art in the near future, while in the immortal Venetians who were his contemporaries there was not even corruptibility. Incomparable colour kept them in exalted health—colour and tone. As much as colour, assuredly the tone of Titian and Tintoretto—the tone of a head against the sky as Tintoretto painted it, or the tone of the arm against the cloud in Titian's "Amor Sagro e Profano," secured the art of Venice against the thought of decadence. But decadence was close upon Parma and Rome. During all these ages of genius, then, the art of painting was intent upon the representation of the Nativity.

It shrank, however, from representing a new-born child, even in the manger; the Nativity, though dramatically rendered, was to be contemplated as a mystery, rather than watched in the taking-place. Thus the Child is nearly always nude, for the sake of the round forms, and some months old. But Giotto, who clothes all his figures heavily, has sometimes a draped and sometimes a swaddled Child, and obviously tries to make the scene "like" the fact. And the two intentions keep pace for some time until the Mystery gains. The Nativity takes place then in the open country, amongst splendid buildings, or under

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a triumphal arch; and the donors of the picture and their patron saints attend with Milton's "bright-harness'd angels" at the "courtly stable."

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SCHOOL OF DONATELLO. ANGELS
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DONATELLO. WINGED PUTTI
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DONATELLO. THE LITTLE ST. JOHN
(FLORENCE)

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# TUSCAN SCULPTURE AND ENAMEL

IN Florence the art of the modeller was far in advance of the painter's. This is not unintelligible, for the sculptor had under his eyes the sculpture of the past, whereas the painter had no painting; he had the conventions and code of a virtually new art to decide. The mosaics and the illuminations were all that the early painters possessed for precedents and models. The difficult art of bas-relief had become Italian through the first Tuscan who learnt of the last Greek; but Italian painting had nothing nearer to Antiquity than some so-called Madonnas of the painter-Evangelist Saint Luke. The mosaics and the illuminations were, indeed, Byzantine, and indirectly Greek. But compare the figures of the enthroned mosaic Madonna at Ravenna, and her ceremonial Child, with the classic sarcophagus that inspired the Pisan. The one is Byzantine, the other Greek. The sculptor, then, inherited the rules of the art. The painter had to devise, for instance, the treatment of a certain degree of perspective by means of the linear art. Margaritone d'Arezzo, born in the year of Magna Charta, and the Sienese who was his contemporary, and Cimabue who followed him after a score of years, together established the general terms of painting.

Thus the Tuscan sculptor, set free by his possession of an established art, was at ease with nature and the convention of bust and bas-relief, and with nature's simple and wild creature the child.



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Giovanni Pisano was born some five years before the nearly Byzantine, the majestic but captive, Cimabue. In the cathedral of Prato and in the Camposanto at Pisa are Bambini of Giovanni's that are agile, springing in the mother's arms, playing with her diadem, perfect children. His father Niccola was in art virtually a Greek, but his glorious "Nativity" upon the Pisa pulpit and that on the Siena pulpit do not, of course, show us a spirited child; though, by the way, Fra Guglielmo of Pisa has an animated little infant whom the women attending the Virgin wash in a stream, at the mouth of the cave of the Nativity, from which sheltered sheep are drinking. Giovanni Pisano's Bambino is assuredly one of the earliest of Italian children studied from life and full of life. And when we speak of the fifteenth century's re-discovery of childish proportion, let us remember that this great sculptor observed it, and was born early in the thirteenth.

Painting was still an art in bonds and difficulties when Donatello produced his beautiful bas-reliefs of a natural Bambino, and the exquisitely modelled bust with the face delicately broad across the charming eyes, and narrowing to the chin—whether called the young St. John or not, purely the portrait of a tender boy; and his lovely boy-Mercury. Fra Angelico was demurely reckless with his anatomy when Jacopo della Quercia, the Sienese, was modelling the perfect hands of his Madonna and her perfect Child in one of the statuettes by the master which are amongst the original treasures of South Kensington Museum; also when Luca della Robbia was using his material with a masterly and liberal hand in the sketch for his bas-relief for the singing-gallery of the Duomo at Florence, a sketch wilder and more

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DONATELLO. HEAD OF A CHILD
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JACOPO DELLA QUERCIA. MADONNA AND CHILD
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LUCA DELLA ROBBIA. SKETCH FOR A PANEL OF THE SINGING GALLERY IN THE DUOMO, FLORENCE

(SOUTH KENSINGTON)

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LUCA DELLA ROBBIA. PANEL OF THE SINGING GALLERY IN THE DUOMO, FLORENCE (FLORENCE)

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animated than the finished work. (South Kensington has this incomparable stucco.) The children of this relief move with impulse and energy in a youthful dance; in another panel they go clashing cymbals, six cymbals at once used with a will. The works of this master, the inventor of the enamelled coloured terra cotta that bears his name, and the eldest of the three who used it, are of ever fresh variety. His, amongst others, is the Bambino who gives best the Papal blessing. There is nothing but what is charming in this action; fantastic as it looks with a baby face fresh from nature, it does nothing but delight us. Botticelli's wonderful picture, his masterpiece, the "Magnificat," in which the Child, turning his face upwards, points to the open page, does not reconcile the action with infancy, but Luca della Robbia makes his little infant a Pontiff with sweetness and ease. Somewhat like this wholly delightful Bambino is Rossellino's, the terra cotta statuette at South Kensington, in which the smile breaks into an open laugh. The Madonna laughs also; at least she has a sub-hilarious face as she looks down at her noisy child, sees the soft gap-toothed mouth, and feels the little tumult of mirth in the breast under her hand. This is something altogether different from the benignant smile, a bestowed smile, with which the painter in the later centuries adorns the Virgin and Child. Luca della Robbia also has a laughing Child in a bas-relief now in the Berlin Museum, and he too makes the Mother laugh with him.

When we turn to the *putti* who are not Christs nor perhaps angels, little laymen dancing in a *rondo* or joyous in procession, or decoratively employed, loaded with thick wreaths of flower, fruit,

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and leaf, laurel, pomegranate, and convolvulus, it is still more difficult to remember that Luca della Robbia and Angelico da Fiesole were of the same age; according to one computation the one but a year older than the other. Luca with his ware not only was a liberal student of nature, but was free enough to use his material gaily. The painter meanwhile was moving with the stiffness of experiment; we might place his child in a church of the early Gothic that had long ceased when he was painting, but Luca della Robbia's enamel *puttino* would seem in place in any age of worthy architecture. Stone, colour, and the Della Robbia ware had their several historic ages, concurrent, but different. More than sixty years later, two other contemporaries, Andrea della Robbia and Botticelli, show something of the same contrast, generally in a lesser degree; but in one respect the contrast of the two later men is equal to that of the two earlier —the anatomy of Botticelli was still reckless, at any rate in the draped figure, whilst that of Andrea della Robbia was easily correct. Botticelli, indeed, follows Angelico, his much less expert predecessor, precisely in a strange ideal of the female figure; both feign that the body has a long region from the ribs to the hip; they interpolate a tract, as it were, unknown to nature. Below this, Botticelli sets the jutting legs of his Graces. Below this, in like manner, but under draperies that disguise the manner of junction, Fra Angelico discreetly places the limbs of his seated figures, with entirely arbitrary knees. It is worth noting that Botticelli does not play this anatomical prank with the nude figure in his beautiful "Birth of Venus." This, however, is not a matter of childish proportion; Botticelli habitually tries for the right proportions of nature in his children.

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LUCA DELLA ROBBIA. CHILD WITH FLOWERS AND FRUIT
(CITTA DI CASTELLO)

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Luca della Robbia is surely one of those immortal artists whose work hardly has a date. It might have been immortal *a parte ante* as well as *a parte post*. It has no obvious beginning, being purely natural and simple. His own invention of enamelled terra cotta, which after a time he perfected with colour, gave him a material that did not alter and the dainty clear surface whereof takes no smirch of time. It is most appropriate to his fresh and spiritual genius, which, finding nothing quite fitted to it in the gold and bronze of its earlier labours, devised this ware, plastic as clay and cheerful as porcelain. Enamelled terra cotta is perpetually young. Most appropriate to his genius and to his material also was the subject of his art. The Virgin and Child are necessary to that lovely art; they are the centre, they sit enthroned over the arch or the middle stone of the doorway it decorates, and the little laymen stand about them with their heavy garlands. Let us add that with the gaiety of porcelain, the Della Robbia ware has no triviality; it is sweetly venerable; its pale blue and white especially accords with the oldest convent threshold that it ever brightened. Matteo Civitali and Verrocchio, also Tuscans, and like the Della Robbias sculptors of children (to apply the name of sculptor somewhat loosely), were architects chiefly, and therefore sculptors as a matter of course. They are not so sportive as their predecessor Donatello in his earlier work, but follow him rather in the graver dignity to which that great sculptor had changed his type in course of time. A Bambino of Verrocchio's gives the benediction, standing before a regal mother richly apparelled; so does a Bambino of Benedetto da Maiano's; one of Pellegrini's clings closely to the neck of her who leans one

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beautiful cheek upon his head; but amongst the innumerable variations of attitude appropriate to sculpture in many a form, from that of enamel to that of bronze, there is nothing quite like one of Jacopo della Quercia's groups, where the Bambino and the Virgin look into each other's eyes. The Madonna and Child of a thousand other designs, in sculpture as in painting, are not intended to seem alone. The Child giving the benediction has the city and the world before him, or at any rate a congregation of Tuscan people; he who smiles from his place on the mother's knee has the passers-by on the dusty roads in sight; and the Suckling who looks over his round shoulder is startled because someone perhaps kneels too near. But this one Mother and Child are quite alone; he has both hands upon her shielding arm, and holds back his head and meets her eyes fully. In much Italian art (as I have been obliged to repeat) there is some form of grace that hinders immediate action and expression; but these workers in terra cotta have no such interception, no such thing postponing, deferring, removing the expression of life, preventing and hindering the close clasp which is the only real manner of holding a baby. Let this solitary Mother and Child be one example, and we shall find others in Desiderio da Settignano's portrait-busts at South Kensington, tender and fine models of creative childish life. Here we find no preoccupation or prejudice (such as the painters so soon assumed), tending quickly to commonplace and platitude. Desiderio (his date is somewhat later than Luca della Robbia's, but Luca is the master of the rest) has observed the childishness of the protruding upper lip, that innocent incident of infancy, as the protruding lower lip is an ex-

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*Madonna and Child.*

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ROSSELLINO. MADONNA AND CHILD
(SOUTH KENSINGTON)

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BENEDETTO DA MAIANO. MADONNA AND CHILD
(PRATO)

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VERROCCHIO. MADONNA AND CHILD
(FLORENCE)

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perienced incident of old age. The one and the other were modelled in these terra cotta busts from life. Luca della Robbia observes also the weakness of the soft mouth of childhood, with the underlip a little sucked in; he models the lips lightly and feebly apart, in two of the portrait-busts at South Kensington. Domenico da Capo d'Istria has a fine erect Bambino, as upright in his spirit as in his attitude; no twist, no head aside is his; and Mino da Fiesole is equally frank in his Saint John the Baptist. These are examples, and no more, representatives of a great school of natural art that lasted nearly a century in Italy.

Luca della Robbia is simple, but Andrea della Robbia, in the succeeding generation, is more divinely simple yet. It would be difficult to place him "later" in spirit than his elder. In such a detail as the treatment of the framing wreaths of close leaves and fruits, he keeps the rich severity of the natural design. Giovanni, the third of the name, lost the severity. And Andrea, in his groups of Madonna and Child, rejects everything that is less than perfect; here is the blue ground, here the lovely Virgin and the lovely Child —two tranquil heads, the veil, the hands, and a few straight summer clouds lying in a blue sky. The altar-piece, probably by him, which represents the Madonna giving her girdle to Saint Thomas in a vision after the Assumption, has a *mandorla* of little angels' heads, and in another beautiful relief they are yet more various—a canopy of delicate portraits with the childish gravity and the childish laugh and the incidents of vital likeness. The "Madonna of the Cushion," at Palermo, is crowned with five such portraits of living angels. It is worth noting, too, how well this master observed the childish

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figure, for in one of the medallions for the Hospital of the Innocents he shows the slight infantine narrowness across the body just under the arms. To the works of these great artists must be added some terra cottas to which no name has been assigned—a fine Florentine boy looking out broadly—called, like most of these portrait-busts, Saint John the Baptist; a beautiful Bacchic cupid, also Florentine and fifteenth-century. But the cupids are few in this art, which was altogether natural and sacred.

Before ending this glance at the children of Italian fifteenth-century sculptúre, let a brief word be said of one child by the sixteenth-century master, the master of masters, Michelangiolo. His bas-relief in the National Museum at Florence is a *tondo* which contains the whole figures of Mother and Child, because she sits crouching with her feet drawn back, and the curve of the little figure of the child-Christ holds just within the circle. The master has not intended to give any childish action to this childish form. With the artificial action and attitude of a man, the Infant leans one elbow on his mother's open book, and his head on his hand. Nor is the Infant of the famous Bruges Virgin less unchildlike. It is not to Michelangiolo that we must look for a child indeed. From the meek masters of a hundred influential years before, the passage is not less than disastrous to this arrogant work of a greatness o'er-leaping itself and falling into a sort of sickliness.

But there is another step to be taken from the noble presence of Donatello, the Della Robbias, Desiderio da Settignano, Pellegrini, Benedetto da Maiano, Jacopo della Quercia, and the rest of that company; it is the step into the nineteenth-century tea-room under the

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ANDREA DELLA ROBBIA. HEAD OF A CHILD
(FLORENCE)

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same roof at South Kensington. This is a room decorated in enamelled terra cotta, Luca della Robbia's imperishable happy material, from top to bottom, in singularly distressing colours and designs of which the figures of children form a part—*putti* dancing, playing with animals, making music and so forth, on the brown and white columns. He, or they, who made these deplorable little figures, had not learnt the principles of the difficult art of relief, and, working in relief on a cylinder, produced arms and legs out of all measure and shape. This discouraging parenthesis is worth writing, if only for the sake of protest against the modern usurpation of material. The decorators of this tea-room ought to make their figures out of something modern, and to leave enamelled terra cotta to those who had a right to it.

To return to Michelangiolo, master of our mixed feelings. Most adult of men, he creates unearthly, unheavenly children of violence, and twists them in strife and effort amongst the mighty ornaments of his Sistine roof; but the young Christs of his sculpture are less than mighty.



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# THE FLORENTINE PAINTERS—I

THE sculptors had recognized the form and proportion of the childish figure, and, more, the incidental characters of the units of childhood. The heavenly Della Robbias had nothing left unlearnt that their art needed to know of nature. But when painting, belated, began to represent the figure, it looked backward to its few examples, chiefly the mosaics, and adopted their bantling, the small-headed child, the son of Greek tradition, whose second life in the early Renascence in Italy was due perhaps to a corrupt following of Greece (one cannot say of Greek art in the "Laocoon," for that very late Rhodian work was not unburied until the sixteenth century), perhaps to some authentic ignorance appropriate to the inexpert art of painting. However this may be, here are painters, contemporary with our sculptors, reverting to the conventional child of the *bassi tempi*. Not only Cimabue did this, but Fra Angelico, and sometimes Benozzo Gozzoli. Fra Angelico is in all respects a man of a certain character rather than a certain date. He was early in character, and should perhaps have had his place in the preceding chapter, in spite of the prevalent sentiment that honours him as one of the masters of the noblest Florentine school. It is at least a tenable opinion that Masaccio was the first great Florentine painter; that Giotto is to be judged, for all his genius, and despite

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BENOZZO GOZZOLI. ST. SEBASTIAN
(SAN GIMIGNANO)

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the certain truth that he takes the longest stride set by any man in the course of modern art, with indulgence; whereas Masaccio is absolutely a great designer. As for Fra Angelico, we have to remind ourselves that more than a hundred years lie between his birth and Giotto's. That his painting was an untimely contemporary with the enamel of Luca della Robbia we have already wondered to observe. And being thus passed on the road, Fra Angelico shows the lagging of his art—lagging, with all its beauties—to be different from the custom of his time, or from that just about to develop, chiefly in two things, facial expression and the natural form of childhood.

He was, in a degree, dramatic; but if we take expression to refer to the face, and to the eyes above all—"countenance," in the eighteenth century, was much what we call expression now—then we cannot say that he was the painter of expressive looks. That he could be, in an infantile way, dramatic, he proved by the activity of some of his little devils when the sweet Frate compelled himself to oppose these symbols of evil to the garlanded representatives of good; and it might be possible to find something a little dramatic in the movement of those figures of trumpet-bearing angels by which his various and most interesting art continues to be made popular. He has, in fact, possession of a certain little energy of action, in the absence of any changes in the wreathed faces of the blest, or in the still looks of a Madonna. For expression he does little more than mark a harmless forehead with a frown. As he took no part in the then modern search for expression, so he took very little in the new knowledge of the figure of children. See, for example, the children in the Vatican picture, "Saint Laurence distributing alms to the poor and widows." There is sweet-

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ness in the Frate's design of the four little ones in this composition. The baby caresses his mother, a little girl looks up at the beneficent deacon, a very good boy and girl who have received their alms go away together with an affectionate little game, and the painter has made them pretty to the utmost of his power, giving them orderly curls, with a forehead of great height for the girl—and a fifteenth-century painter could do no more than this for woman or girl. But the proportions are nearly those of the adult figure, and the little ones with their graces look like smooth-headed dolls. In the "Madonna and Child" of the San Marco Museum at Florence, in the "Madonna and Child" at the Uffizi Gallery, as in the same master's repetition of the same subject, the Bambini are little dolls—the first an affectionate doll, full of something lighter than sawdust, sitting on nothing, but still trying sincerely to lay a filial little face against the Madonna's cheek; the second a ceremonial doll, holding the globe and giving the benediction, but yet all dolls because of their proportions. In the most important of Fra Angelico's altar-pieces—the "Coronation of the Virgin" in the Accademia at Florence, painted in 1441 for the Prior Francesco Maringhi—two little children have the middle place in the foreground; they are evidently introduced at the suggestion of their parents in order to recommend them devoutly to heavenly favour. They have been given into the care of two Saints, a man and a woman, doubtless their patrons. If the Frate has intended any portraiture, it is not enough to define them; they are merely little Tuscans on their knees.

Masaccio yields us little. He was as much an adult as Michelangiolo; but when he designs a little child it is with more feeling

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BENOZZO GOZZOLI. ST. AUGUSTINE AT SCHOOL (Detail)
(SAN GIMIGNANO)

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and less condescension. I find a slight figure in the "Almsgiving" of the Brancacci chapel, in the Carmelite Church at Florence, an infant naturally unconcerned in what is going forward; in the San Clemente paintings another child naturally clumsy; a Bambino clasping the Virgin's neck closely, at Bremen; at San Clemente, again, a doll-like child on the shoulder of Saint Christopher.

In the order of time, Fra Filippo Lippi follows near to Fra Angelico, being twenty-five years later in date of birth, but much more in the consciousness and complexity of mind, and the learning of the art. With Fra Filippo, as with many others, the child-Christ and the boy Saint John are nearly the whole of childhood. In the beautiful Berlin picture, the Bambino lies with one finger to his mouth, on a carpet of flowers in a wood. The figure is infantine, the action infantine, but the grace is artificial; almost as equivocal is the Saint John, round and youthful, standing with his thin rod of a cross and his little pennon, but—resolved to compass an Italian elegance as indispensable to design—the painter has disposed the little legs in the attitude of adult strength and adult idleness and leisure; no child stands so, in unstable equilibrium; a child uses both legs in repose, and gets what grip of the ground he can. It is evident that Filippo Lippi did not intend to give the familiar way of a child, but the ideal way of a "San Giovannino" in Florentine art. In a *tondo* at the Pitti Palace, Fra Filippo introduces the "Nativity of the Virgin" in the background of a "Virgin and Child." Of the new-born Mary in the distance there is nothing to say, except that Saint Anne seems to be caressing the cheek of her swaddled daughter. A little girl, of no obvious meaning, is also in the picture;

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through an archway is seen the encounter of Saint Joachim and Saint Anne, the tired husband welcomed by his wife on the steps of their dwelling before the birth of Mary. The Bambino himself, in the foreground group, is, truth to say, an ugly Bambino, in the painter's despite, seated in the lap of a very lovely and innocent Madonna. In one of the most beautiful of Fra Filippo's simpler paintings, the group at the Uffizi, two angels lift up the Child on their hands, so that the Madonna, in her charmingly elaborate veil, may contemplate her son and pray with her two hands joined. One of these young boy-angels looks over his shoulder with the wearisome Italian grace, even then already a platitude.

Benozzo Gozzoli's seventy years were well within the quattrocento; he did not see the summits of the sixteenth century. In a symbolic composition such as his "Saint Sebastian" in the Church of Sant' Agostino at Gimignano, he gives to his children something of the old conventional proportion. The whole noble gathering of heaven and earth is, in this painting, arbitrary. Saint Sebastian is colossal, and amongst the little people on their knees at his pedestal are smaller people who are a kind of children, smooth boys on this side, smooth girls on that. It is a singular Sebastian, free of all his arrows, clothed and combed with decorum, his martyrdom finished, and the long work of intercession begun. But Heaven is busy with his arrows. One is in the hand of the Eternal Father; the seraphim hold arrows instead of trumpets, and pierce with them the clouds of the floor of the skies; the angels that crown the Saint hold the arrow and the palm; broken arrows are scattered in the middle region, a flying angel snaps one in two. With all this, the action is

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FRA ANGELICO. ST. LAURENCE GIVING ALMS (Detail)

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curiously undramatic. That amid a dramatic people whose daily talk, whose voices, whose hands, are dramatic, there should be painters so failing—and there are many—is hard to understand unless we consider the embarrassment of the celestial company and attitude—the real shyness. An Italian himself would call it "*soggezione.*" And in fact he does lose something of his drama in talk when he is addressing a stranger or a superior, and regains it instantly with an almost grotesque expressiveness—for the tone of the voice, the language of the fingers are more than fit—when he turns from the stranger to say something to a fellow-citizen, or when he has to talk of his own daily affairs. So Benozzo Gozzoli, whose upper angels have rigid and unmeaning hands, and whose Christ and Madonna in this same picture use symbolic but inexpressive actions, has more drama in the multitude of the faithful on earth; and in the "Saint Augustine at School" he is free and has the natural impulse. In the sad scene of the chastisement in this picture is an urchin in a spotted cap, holding his inkhorn and pen, who is dramatically admirable. So are the two boys on their way to school, although they are doing little. The painter has intended—except perhaps for a slight convention in the hands—to design childish children, and to make them childishly beautiful. We see more of boys, clothed and about their business, in Benozzo Gozzoli's frescoes at the Camposanto of Pisa than in a hundred years of the work of other Tuscans.

The "re-animate Greek," Botticelli, had but to recall, and hardly to learn, Antiquity, when that "new learning" which was the old came to Florence; such is Ruskin's judgment of this painter, of

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whom others are not so sure. For example, one might think his sadness—the sadness of his Venus—to be something rather of the latter civilization than of the former; another might find the whole spirit that looks askance from the beautiful eyes of Botticelli's Saint Johns and his stripling angels to be wholly mediaeval and Christian. But in the Madonna he has, almost invariably, the undisturbed look, above expression, which it is possible, by some effort, to assign to the Greek original, the antique ancestry, of his mind. This serenity the Madonna shares with the rejoicing goddess, with the Graces, with all the gay flower-spotted persons of the "Primavera." Needless to say, his children are not Greek. His child-Christ would be more beautiful if Botticelli had not been obviously bound to the good gossiping parochial fifteenth-century idea of a fine child, a champion child. It must be what the French call *plantureux*. To assign to this *physique* a conscious intelligence, to make of a full-fed boy, six months old, a kind of theologian, is to create a little figure of ambiguous aspect and manners. In one group he points to the open book, in another he seems to teach his mother from the spread page. Botticelli was a religious man and, according to Mr. Berenson, "the greatest artist of lineal design that Europe has ever had." His double preoccupation had regard, firstly, to the beauty and dignity of the Mother and the splendid physical condition and wisdom of the Child, so that his picture should express his devotion and satisfy that of all who looked at it; and secondly, to the perfection of the decorative composition. He had few of the group of "feelings" with which, after five hundred years of life, art, and literature, true and false, we contemplate a child. It is

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BOTTICELLI. From the "STORY OF MOSES" (Detail)
(ROME)

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impossible that the world should have passed these centuries without learning some new loves amongst many studies in humanity; and, accordingly, we, having lost much, have gained that company of emotions which we call our love of nature. It would be insincere to profess that we find it in Botticelli; his true lovers prize him for more appropriate, more timely, and more national qualities of heart and vision. His love of nature in the Bambino brings about that charming holding-out of the arms, and inexpert caressing, of the Bardi picture at Berlin, the early Santa Maria Nuova "Madonna and Child with Angels," and the "Madonna delle Rose" of the Pitti Palace, to take typical examples. The last-named is generally judged to be, though something more than a *quadro di scuola*, not altogether from Botticelli's hands. But the Child's action, if not the drawing, is at any rate Botticellian; and it assuredly does not come within our present love of nature. It is not nearer to our sense of childish attitude and action than are the roses that fill the background of this *tondo* to our sense of the character, the growth, the aspect, the stalks, leaves, thorns, buds, and faces of roses. Here is something different from convention, which uses the mere suggestions of natural form for rigid decoration. Botticelli's roses and golden fruits are not ruled in ranks. They and his Bambini are the fruits of his love of nature, a love of nature at arm's length. It is in some of the angels, and in more than one Saint John, that the look is more direct; both the beauty and the expression are immediate, or almost immediate, as close as Botticelli chose to approach, or perhaps was able to approach. The lovely *tondo* in our National Gallery has been at different times held to be by the master, by a



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pupil working under the master's direction, and by a painter merely of the Florentine school of Botticelli's century. Whatever hand designed and painted this beautiful group was the hand of genius. No study of children painted by the Italian masters could pass over these exquisite heads. They are heads of later childhood, the age of Saint John the Baptist being decided upon by the painter's choice. Historically he would be, as Raphael so often makes him, a companion infant to our Lord; it is characteristic of the painter of this Madonna and of other doubtful Botticellian work—for instance, the picture at the Louvre—to group a Baptist of some twelve years old with the infant Christ. The three heads have thus a touching difference in their youthfulness. In the National Gallery picture there are angels of Saint John's age, and of equal beauty. The young Baptist is clad in his camel's hair and carries his slender cross. In all these lovely faces there is the Botticellian length; but whereas the undoubted Botticelli was somewhat fond of an oblong shape, especially, it would seem, when he aimed at singular beauty, the school-painter has the long form with a pointed chin. Botticelli in his later years drew the face with a slightly pointed chin. He and his pupil, if pupil it was, had alike an ideal eyebrow, arched and far above the eye, implying a huge eye-socket or orbit, but one filled smoothly with flesh. That space between the eyebrow and the closure of the eyelid was so dear to the painter in question that he carried it perhaps beyond the probabilities of anatomy, certainly beyond experience; in the unquestioned work of Botticelli it has hardly the look of wistfulness that the school-painter gives it, allying it with the gaiety of the chin. The Saint John of the

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BOTTICELLI. MADONNA AND CHILD (Detail)
(FLORENCE)

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Louvre group, that beautiful boy with sidelong look and folded arms, has the eyebrows and the chin. So has Botticelli's own Bambino in the picture at the Pitti, in which the Child is about to kiss his Mother.

Finally, these notes on the typical children of Botticelli should close upon the most noble composition known as "The Childhood of Moses" amongst the frescoes in the Sistine Chapel. It is a part of the great composition of the "History of Moses," in which Botticelli painted seven scenes from the life, or rather the early life, of the Patriarch—that is, from the smiting of the Egyptian who had slain a Hebrew, to the Exodus. The childhood of Moses does not appear, but the latest scene of the picture, the leading-forth of Israel, contains the figures of two children; hence, perhaps, through some misapprehension, the customary name. It is the child who, without labour, bears the burden of all pilgrimages, even that of the mere change of home; here are the people going into the wilderness, and Botticelli bears in mind the children who are to be tired and to weep upon the road. Moses leads out a little company whereby the painter represents Israel. They are loaded with their few possessions; and the foremost group is that of two young unequal boys. The elder carries his bundle, and with the bundle a little lively dog; the younger uses both hands to cling to his mother's hand and arm; he must make two steps to one of the men and women. He too is a "fine child" of the time; but perhaps because the master in designing this beautiful head did not labour especially for wisdom and the favour of God and man, he has produced more simple nobility than in painting many a child-Christ. The elder boy pities him,

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looking down with the passionless aspect of *quattrocento* feeling at the largely-moulded infantine face; and the young one looks up with a directly sorrowful appeal, but with beauty undiscomposed. Also in the Sistine frescoes is Botticelli's boy with a snake. It is evidently a fine figure, now more than half effaced; the child, encumbered with an armful of grapes, looks down at his leg, around which the snake is clinging. Professor Steinmann sees in this design —and the likeness is manifest even in the present decay—an imitation of the antique statue, "The Child with a Serpent," now in the museum of the Capitol. Botticelli, the Florentine, summoned to Rome by Pope Sixtus IV., to work with Ghirlandajo, Perugino, and Cosimo Rosselli at the decoration of those walls of his chapel which Michelangiolo was not to paint, had the art of Antiquity before his eyes, fragments of much that had been then newly shattered, relics of ancient Rome, and some few of that ancient Greece of which Ruskin holds him to have been the true citizen. He gives us this one clear sign of his attention to the art of the past—the figure of a child. Leaving Rome, he returned to his work for convent and church—the Madonna, the young angel, the holy Child. He returned also to the study of Dante; Vasari charges him, without reason, with giving to this literature the time due to his art. Botticelli did, in fact, follow his own art diligently until those last years which were given to the yet closer practice of his religion.

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*D. Anderson*

BOTTICELLI. BOY WITH A SNAKE (Detail)
(ROME)

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# THE FLORENTINE PAINTERS—II

WHEN Domenico Ghirlandajo painted for the church of Santa Maria Novella the stateliest of all the Nativities of Mary, arranging the scene in a palace chamber and admitting a company of Florentine ladies to congratulate Saint Anne, he crowned the decorated room with a frieze of nude children at play. They are the *putti* of whom art, by that time, had made an established convention, and of whom in time to come art was to make a continual commonplace. Something in these equivocal children, infantile and yet not infantile, graceful as the adult would have them and corpulent as the gossip would have them, so took the fancy of Italy as to make a rule and an example for centuries. Your Italian house-decorator to-day is fairly able to make you a design of *putti*, dolphins, and garlands after the manner of the fifteenth century. The child in question has become a kind of repeating pattern, and he owes his long life in art, through high times and decadent, to a love of the beauty of children that was an incomplete love, or one might rather say a love that filled completely the capacities of a somewhat shallow heart—like, *d'ailleurs*, some Italian music. Yet it is to Ghirlandajo that we owe one of the most direct and sincere children of that time or the times following, one of the best children of Tuscan art, whom Parma, Rome, nor Bologna was to

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match. This is the child who loves the bottle-nosed man in Ghirlandajo's beautiful picture, a charming child exceedingly urgent yet gentle, with the little childish upper lip out, and the lower lip soft. The man loves him, and is a sweet old man, as gentle as the boy, and the two profiles turn to each other, records of a tenderness certainly alive four hundred years ago. In his noble "Adoration of the Kings" (Chapel of the Innocenti, Florence), with its glorious company of visitors at the shed of the Nativity, and its great animated landscape of river and mountains, Ghirlandajo has made the unusual introduction of two little boys amongst the worshippers. They seem to be little Florentines rather than little angels, and each kneels meekly on both knees. Saint John the Baptist brings one, and a bearded Saint whom I do not recognize brings the other. The same master treats "The Espousals" as a festival ceremony under the arches of a great palace court. With all possible simplicity and gravity he deals with the grotesque incident of the spite of Mary's rejected suitors—an incident that seems to have been added to the tradition by the busy fancy of painters; for many of them represent it: one of the young men, in the extremity of his disappointment, deals Saint Joseph a hearty blow on the head at the moment of the marriage benediction. What is to the present purpose is that Ghirlandajo gives a kind of under-plot to his composition by the brisk movement of children. A little girl whisks, much excited, into the picture with her mother, to see the wedding; two other little girls run in from the other side.

Young if not infantine angels are in the picture by Leonardo da Vinci and Verrocchio—a beautiful detail of which is detached

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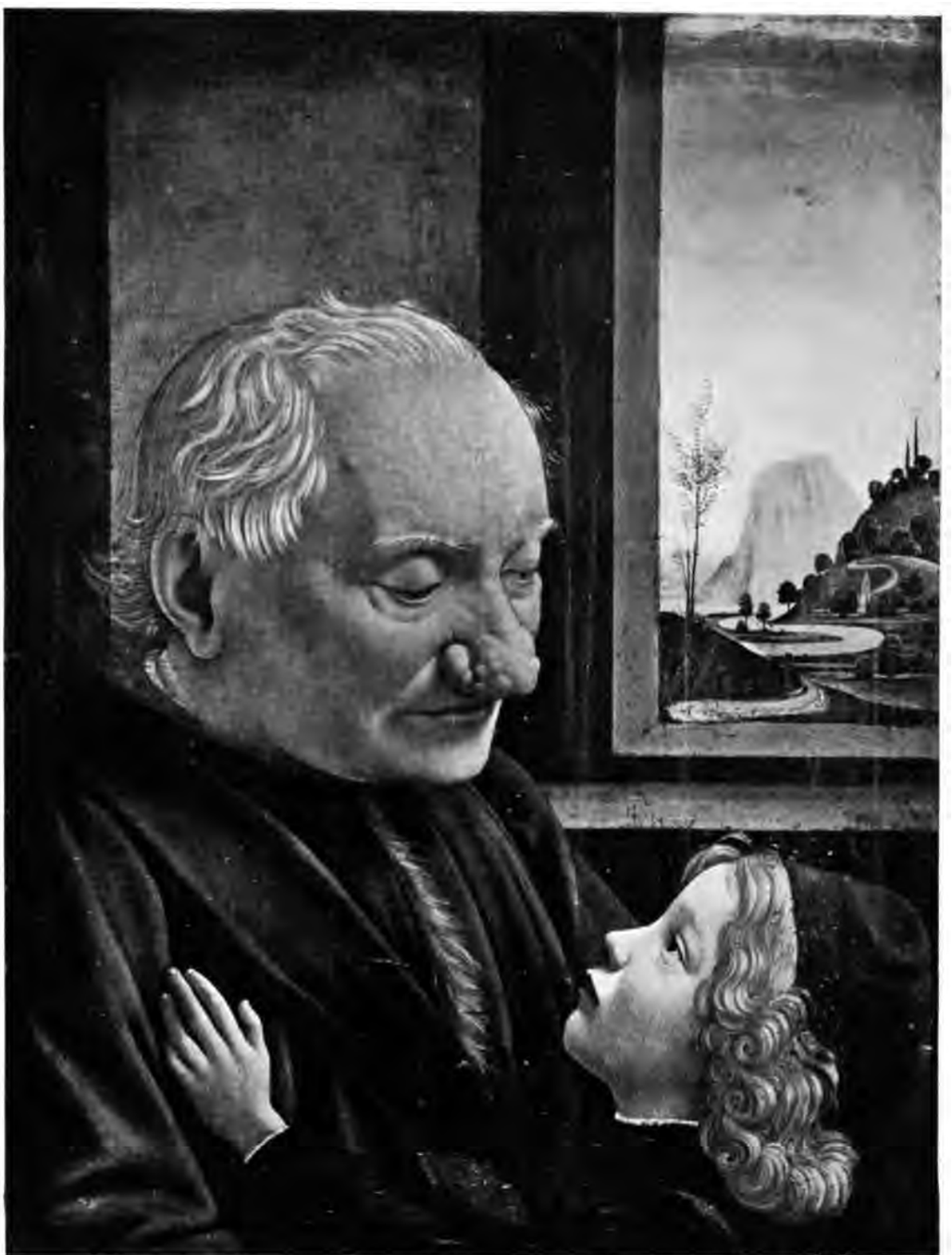

*D. Anderson*

GHIRLANDAJO. OLD MAN AND CHILD
(LOUVRE)

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here. The heads are lovely and noble, the nearer all-eloquent, with sweetness, eagerness and tranquillity at once in the expression —the "countenance"—of all the mobile features, the quick mouth and the eyes a little caught up with dramatic impulse of feeling. (It is this angel that is judged to be Leonardo's most certain share in the picture.) If the first young creature is hardly a child, the second angel is younger, as he is also graver. Both are in a profound and tender ecstasy, but the angelic nature differs, as though these were children indeed, and had their human inheritance of character. Both are loving and both are intellectual, but the elder resembles the loving seraphim, and the younger the wise cherubim, as the Doctors of the Church divided them. The Florentine painters were theologians one and all.

Among Leonardo da Vinci's innumerable and admirable designs is the head of a child, here reproduced, beautiful in drawing, with the solid of the round cheek and the strong lines of the curved eyelids. The master's hand has so carefully followed the thin curls of soft hair in this study from life, that a writer on the spiral forms of art and nature has attempted to give unlooked-for significance to those touches. Nay, he sees in one or two spiral curls on the middle forehead, where a baby's scanty hair is a little thicker, evidence that Leonardo da Vinci built the spiral staircase at Amboise. However this may be, here is a child's head that is indeed a child's, childish in such observed details as the fullness over the upper eyelid, and the infantine parody of the line of age beneath the under; purely a baby's head, untouched by the fifteenth-century prejudice, and we know that it is thus untampered with because it is only a

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head, and goes no further. Were there so much as a line to indicate the shoulders!—nay, it is easy to draw, in fancy, the suggestion of shoulders turned aside in the fifteenth-century manner, in an attitude at odds with the character of the face not many months old.

Amongst Leonardo da Vinci's Bambini there is one to whom the master has manifestly intended to present the lowliest homage of extreme old age. This is the child-Christ of his "Adoration of the Kings" at the Uffizi. There is the customary twist and curve of adult and conscious elegance, and the Child shares it with his mother, but the group is a lovely one. At the feet of the Virgin the Wise Men are prostrate; one, white-bearded, kisses the green grass; another, crouching, raises himself on one hand to offer his gift of gold; and this the Child stretches a hand to touch in sign of acceptance.

It would be too rash to question the change of attribution whereby the "Christ disputing with the Doctors," in the National Gallery, has been withdrawn from Leonardo da Vinci and given to Luini. Yet, questions of execution apart, those doctors to the right have much of the Leonardo caricature, the short profile in particular. And an inexpert but observant eye may see Leonardo da Vinci also in the smoothness and relief; in the type of the figure of Christ, too, the master's design and his taste look well-known. But whoever painted this once famous picture, having to paint the Saviour at twelve years old, was not content with that age, but added some years. Dramatically, the figure is lacking, but lacking in the manner to which the work of masters has accustomed us. Often do the dramatic Italian hands fail us in their work in the schools, and

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*Alinari*

ANDREA VERROCCHIO, AND LEONARDO. ANGELS FROM "THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST" (Detail)

(The foremost figure probably painted by Leonardo)

(FLORENCE)

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nowhere do they fail us more languidly than in the hands they painted. The merest wayside theatre in Italy shows us the living language of the hands; yet the painter of "Christ disputing with the Doctors" has devised no better action for a disputant than this of checking off arguments in order, with the fingers of the right hand upon the fingers of the left. There is no weaker presentation of a course of reasoning. But the National Gallery has now a Leonardo da Vinci of somewhat more authority, a variant of the picture in the Louvre, the "Madonna of the Rocks." The sweetness of the two children here is perhaps the best character that the master intended to bring about in any Christ or Saint John known to be his. The little Baptist prays with folded hands, kneeling, as no young child ever knelt in life, upon one knee. The Madonna draws him prettily nearer, with her hand on his shoulder, to her own Child, who gives him the benediction. A young angel attends on the child-Christ, and in the French picture points to the praying Saint John.

The nearest in order of chronology to Leonardo da Vinci is Filippino Lippi, but this great and exquisite master is nearer to Sandro Botticelli in genius. We know that Botticelli was his protector and friend, and somewhat like his elder brother, inasmuch as both learnt of the younger man's father, Fra Filippo. The bonds of the three in their art are signs full of interest, not only for the modern measuring expert student, but for the plainer pilgrim in the galleries. They loved alike the half-grown angel who may barely enter this book's company of children. Their Saint John the Baptist is much of the same age, and sometimes may not be known amongst them but by his camel's hair and the long light rod of his distinctive



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cross. Filippo, Botticelli, Filippino, and he who painted the National Gallery full-face Madonna, and he again who painted the lovely profile Virgin, so long called a Botticelli, in the Louvre, designed the same full bow-mouth, the same somewhat heavy hair, but hair with life in its spring from the head and in the slight final curl of the several locks. And the eyes are not large, under eyelids that withdraw beneath the fullness of the orbit and the high-uplifted eyebrows, and the glances are sidelong and most charming and candid. Filippino Lippi did not generalize his companies of men, or make them resemble each other; he distinguished, intently, head from head amongst the old, but these angels and their friend the tender Baptist are like one another in the sweetness of their touching beauty on the fine edge of gaiety and sadness. Filippino designed now the shorter face, with wider-parted eyes, of his father's pictures, and now the narrower and longer form of his friend's choice, though always with the eyebrows much above the eyes. Notwithstanding this variation, there is rather a monotony of beauty in these groups of full-lipped young creatures, tranquilly animated, with their obsequious eyes bent on the child-Christ, or glancing softly aside into the world or into the heavens, to see whether men or seraphim are aware of his greatness. In the detail from the lovely picture in the Pitti Palace, which shows a fair-haired angel dropping rose-leaves, the Saint John is much the youngest of the heavenly children. A little of the camel's hair on his shoulder and his long cross mark him; he is quick and childlike, dark-haired and dark-eyed, and his locks are somewhat wilder than those of the angels, who are very trimly combed. The minister of rose-petals wears, besides his beautiful

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...inal curl of the ...eyelids that with... ...high-uplifted eye... ...t charming and candid. ...panies of men, or make ...ed, intently, head from head ...their friend the tender Baptist ...s of their touching lay on ...ss. Filippo ... ...yes, of his father's ... ...of his friend's ... ...e the eyes. ...notony of beauty ... ...tranquilly ... ...Christ, or gleaming ... ...to see whether ... ...the detail from the lovely picture in the Pitti ...ows a fair-haired angel dropping ... much the youngest of the heavenly children. A little ...d's hair on his shoulders and his long curls mark him; ...k and childish, rose-flushed and dark-eyed, and his locks ...mewhat wilder than those of the angels, who are very trimly ...ed. The ... ... years, besides his beautiful

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*From a painting of the Holy Family*
*(Pitti Palace, Florence)*

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wings, a glorious and elaborate dress; the little downward-gazing one has sleeves of his pattern, the aureoles are transparent but delicately patterned. In the group of two companion angels, with the springing hair, a gentle difference of character in seraph and cherub resembles that of Leonardo da Vinci's and Verrocchio's pair. If we may place these delicate boys in the company of children, we cannot count the Archangel in those ranks. Gabriel, though but a celestial year or so more advanced in age than the young comrades of Saint John, is a grown angel. Filippino Lippi's Gabriel is an energetic and most beautiful messenger, not so impetuous as Titian's, who comes in at a run, with fleet foot, open wing, arm aloft, and flying apparel, under a bursting cloud, to a Virgin overwhelmed. Filippino's announcing angel is tranquil, but his action is direct and full of power. This is one of the Saint Gabriels of art who kneel to the kneeling Mary.

Filippino's angels in his great Cistercian picture, "The Vision of Saint Bernard," are young; their stature is more childish than the character of their heads, and they are moreover bent, so that the erect figure of Mary may have a foil. They share something of the commonplace of angelic beauty, as the rocks under which Saint Bernard sits writing at a rustic desk have the commonplace of an unobserved nature, being designed by the hand of a man who never cared to see a rock or a wayside stone as it is. The chief beauty of this work is in the tender and majestic figure and countenance of Saint Bernard. It is perhaps worth noting that in drawing his angels on a moderately small scale Filippino Lippi followed, with his later feeling, a convention of his predecessors, who frankly varied

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the scale of their figures. I have not called certain companies of angels children, because they were rather small than young, designed to give dignity to a great Madonna. They have no part in this volume.

Lorenzo di Credi's gentle designs have their differences amongst the works of other minor Florentines of the second half of the fifteenth century, but those differences, though visible, are not easily to be described. He seeks for all possible expression in his young angels, expression of devotion and sweetness, and places a representative of the impetuous seraphim and of the thoughtful cherubim on either side of a tranquil Mother and Child: young angels of fourteen, small-headed, and on a small scale. Lorenzo di Credi's variants of these well-known creatures are sleeker and more smooth than others. Though a Florentine citizen and the pupil of a Florentine, he is even less distinctively Tuscan than Leonardo da Vinci, who was his fellow-pupil in Verrocchio's workshop.

Younger, more childlike, and nearer to nature than the young adolescent angels of contemplation are the little musicians. They are less smooth, more active, and busy with their strings. The players and singers of the earlier masters produced their music with an angelic ease and carelessness of method; but the child of the later school is industrious and able. He is the pleasant fiction of a day in which simple action had begun to amuse or attract the painter's eye, in which the pencil paused with pleasure upon the way of a player with a lute and the incidents of the fingering. To feign the musicianly activity of a little child, to bend a babe's hand to the strings or to put his small mouth to the recorders, was a game that

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Angels.

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pleased the fifteenth century in Italy; it was such a mixture of realism and miracle as took the fancy of the time. One is reminded of the distant, different northern fancy, the mixing of observed fact with a pathetic convention in the insanity of the tragic stage, the sweetness of an innocent intelligence astray, the favour and the prettiness of the distracted woman. Carpaccio, Bellini, Bonifazio Veronese, Fra Bartolommeo, Frate Antonio the Olivetan, Rosso Fiorentino, are but a few of the painters, major and minor, who have put instruments into these infant hands; gross hands of natural-unnatural *putti* are some of them, and some again are animated with an eager grace. Frate Antonio gives to one fleshly babe (standing with one bent leg, for elegance) a triangle, and to another a flute; Bonifazio puts a large lute into the round arms of a winged musician; Raphael (in the "Madonna del Baldacchino" at the Pitti Palace) gives to two corpulent little boys, in attitudes both adult and effeminate, a scroll to sing from; Rosso gives us a sudden delight in the impetuous head of his *angioletto* with the cheek pressed upon the lute, the mouth close to the strings, the wings erect and the wild hair; Fra Bartolommeo makes his beautiful winged boy, in the cathedral at Lucca, a singer to his lute; Carpaccio's middle child in the "Presentation of Christ," one of the loveliest figures in Venetian art, is intent upon his lute.

Fra Bartolommeo's boy is as much unlike a human child as might be one of the fifteenth-century heavenly choir, no more. He is not grown up, but has an alien felicity and sweetness in his beautiful eyes and in his majestic action. Here is expression, and here is a childish abundance fairly accordant with nature at her

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richest. Fra Bartolommeo, the Dominican successor of Fra Angelico after nearly a hundred years, is generally of a cold nature; his nobility of composition has a look of unheavenly state. He does not stoop, it is true, to the demonstrative and obvious dignities and graces practised sometimes by greater masters in the "late" period of Florentine art about to set in when he was painting. His design is too haughty for that consciousness, but the haughtiness is somewhat mundane. His work does not make that grave appeal to tenderness of which all art before the latter half of the *quattrocento* was full—architecture, sculpture, painting, music—or at any rate we in our day think it to have been thus full, and take upon ourselves the reply of sensibility. If we were children we should call him "grand," with the protest implied in that childish word. When we were young, he seemed the most unsympathetic of the masters of the great time; and the English pre-Raphaelites doubtless renounced him as flatly as any master one could name. Yet, for all the chill, for all the gesture, for all his entirely adult spirit, he could design so beautiful a natural thing as this minstrel child. It is not a figure of the divine beauty of Carpaccio's angel also playing his instrument in the foreground of a Mystery; and the difference is one evidently of genius or inspiration; but short of the wilder and simpler loveliness of the Venetian's child, the Florentine's is a noble creature.

Thus far these Tuscan children have been designed by "pre-Raphaelites"; for the arbitrary incompleteness of the definition which the name expresses is proved by the inclusion of Michelangiolo in those ranks. But Andrea del Sarto was a Florentine painter born next after the Umbrian master who was to leave so

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ROSSO. ANGEL PLAYING THE LUTE (Detail)
(FLORENCE)

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much corruptible, if not corrupt, in the art of Italy. Andrea del Sarto improves on the graceful game played by so many Florentines with the soft nude figures of the two children at the knees of their mothers, Mary and Elizabeth. If the former Italian painters had rounded the gesture, and bent the knee, and turned aside the head, his design was yet more curved and facile. It was yet more manifestly the design of the "sentimentalist," to use a modern word not very handsome in form, but necessary now that we have begun to unmask and expose the character. In painting, the sentimentalist, all preoccupied with the *banalité* of his own device, had neither sight nor insight of incomparable nature. Sentimental without sensibility, he kept unwarmed the secret coldness and unmoved the obscure hardness of the sentimental heart.

For, watching thus the artificial attitude rehearsed by generation after generation of painters, I doubtless have dwelt too much upon the sin of commission in those who attributed to little children these graces, these rounded elbows, and these legs placed like those of a club-man standing to talk before a stroll. But assuredly it is the graver offence of omission—"Ye did it not"—wherewith we have chiefly to charge the Italians. They would not see the unconscious child, "the poor child at his play," as Henry Vaughan says, or the wayside nursling as he looked every day, plain to be seen; they not only devised, but they neglected; gave no attention to that simple and abundant beauty, that straight aspect and direct gesture of innumerable children; and inasmuch as they did it not to the least of these, they did it not to the Child painted in a thousand pictures upon the Virgin's knees.

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# PORTRAITS

NEVERTHELESS, another painter born after Raphael, a sixteenth-century painter who nearly closed the Florentine school—Bronzino—restores the love of the nature of childhood, that had been habitually a little falsified after the days of the Della Robbias and before his own. Bronzino virtually restored in Florence the portraiture of children; giving, as he did, the name of the child to a ceremonial portrait in the apparel of the day, he may be said to have been the first explicit portraitist of little boys and girls; for Desiderio da Settignano, Luca della Robbia, Jacopo della Quercia, and the rest of that all-noble company changed the name, while they studied the incidents of the face, of a living child. They named the boy Saint John the Baptist, but Bronzino gives him a more personal as well as a lesser dignity, takes from him the heavenly and gives him the courtly honours. While Desiderio da Settignano modelled the oval of a soft cheek, and showed to the light of all these centuries how two weak lips met, and how the whole face of one Florentine child was made, that child's name passed into the innumerable multitude of names forgotten upon earth. But now Bronzino, after many years, stepping aside from the convention of the Holy Family that prevailed in his own art of painting, names a likeness; and at once we acknowledge

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ANDREA MANTEGNA. FAMILY OF LODOVICO GONZAGA (Detail)
(MANTUA)

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a fellow-creature. The portrait of a boy in the National Gallery is one of a long series of portraits of children. Noble patrons seem to have finally forgotten, at this time—full sixteenth century—the early scruple that prevented the portraiture of the living and individual face, except by way of devotion in order to recommend to Heaven the soul that was lodged in such or such a body; and the body was meekly drawn, whether subdued by a small scale or subdued by plain raiment; in either case in profile, with joined hands, looking to the Saint or contemplating the Mystery, never turning faces and jewels to the world, and implying no respect on the part of the painter or of the donor to the history, character, or date of the person. Such a scruple of humility did exist, but gave way by degrees, for Andrea del Sarto, Franciabigio, and Ghirlandajo, in Florence (as well as Titian and Raphael without), painted portraits. Francia, in Bologna, painted children's portraits. In Bronzino's figures we have at once the patent personality, and the assertion of the importance of the name, the year, the circumstance. The picture of Eleonora da Toledo, at the Uffizi, having all the tranquillity of countenance that was held to comport with the nobility of portraiture, has yet an expressive action, inasmuch as the mother has her hand on the shoulder of the child a certain passage of whose life she desired to record, and he has his foreshortened little hand on the rich dress in which she sits encased in state. So rested the hand of Cowper on the English flowers of a flimsier dress than this magnificent *broccato*, one worn by his own mother. The likeness of child to mother, especially the resemblance of eyes and eyebrows, is one of those human incidents of which the record touches us; the



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mere simple fact is close to one of the sources of the "tears of things."

With Bronzino art in Florence enters on a new century; so does Italy. Fathers and mothers desired that their children's own childhood should be remembered, and not merely childhood at its best. It is worth noting that with the portraiture of children, the exaggerated grace is allowed to rest, at any rate for the purpose of the moment. The painter is persuaded, by the erect and forthright aspect of a living child before him, to leave his tricks of posture aside, or to give them up to the children of holier families than the best of the Florentine. The boy whose portrait is painted is straight, or full-face, upright, thick-set, quite inapt to bend or glance or in any way to copy the ideal of sweetness so habitual in Italian design. And with this fidelity to the square shape of nature comes a certain severity of design, or rather of composition, which makes it seem strange that Bronzino the portrait-painter should be a pupil and successor of painters of the most ideal boys. Nature is more rigid than Italian design of the fifteenth century and onward; for whereas the linear arts elsewhere and at another time may be thought stiffer than life, in the country and the age that were ripening for Raphael they were more lax and easier, more *coulant* and unbraced, and therefore soon to be more inelastic and sickly, than life. Elegance and ease of posture in design run that risk of dullness which awaits rhetoric in literature. When rhetoric has been strained too much and too often its language looses elasticity; loses the sensible flexion and tension that are welcome in the using; loses the friction, friction of air to the pinion or of water to the oar, that makes the using worth while. Relaxed imagery, or hyberbole, or

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*Alinari*

TITIAN. PORTRAIT
(VENICE)

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literary violence of any kind, is all too easy, as was the task of drawing water in a sieve, assigned to the daughters of Danaus. We must pity them, not because their work was hard, but because it was light. And so it is with the Italian painters and the relaxed ideal they so long abused.

Moreover, taking the suggestion of portraiture and its honest action, and looking through the years and centuries before Bronzino, we glean here and there a slight accessory figure, an incident in a composition, which is childlike and looks solitary. An example much to the point is Jacopo da Pontormo's "Joseph and his Kindred in Egypt" at the National Gallery. Here are the *putti*, ambiguous as usual, turning and running in the way of Italian art; and here are in the midst two little boys who are little boys such as humanity bears, children turning the way they look and supplying no antithesis of the movement of limbs and head. The boys, in fact, have been fighting; they are apart from the fluent good and unclothed children; they wear street clothes and have less good manners. They are possibly the first street boys of painting. Now this group from the life is small and unnoticeable, but it has the sincerity of portraiture; and, in effect, we find one of the two figures to be, conjecturally at least, a portrait, and the portrait of Bronzino himself as a boy! Again, in that very beautiful little picture, also in the National Gallery, Ercole de' Roberti's "Israelites gathering Manna in the Wilderness," there is a stray infant not on artistic duty, a little by-way child, quite insignificant except to the eye looking for life, a little thing, as far as it goes a portrait; and distantly akin to another by-way child, one of the most perfect children of any of

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the schools—Rembrandt's wonderful little spectator in his National Gallery "Nativity." This last looks over, leaning, at the Child lying in the light, and the light shows us his own most beautiful and touching person and the exquisite folded hands. What other painters did by rote, or with habitual intention, Rembrandt did with actual intention. And there is no surer sign of that immeasurable superiority of spirit and truth than the power and peace of this mere action of looking-on, the action of a child, under the touch of that incomparable genius. Dramatic, instant, unconscious, and perfectly simple is the attitude of that little boy, brought thither by the shepherds, leaning on his hands. And Rembrandt leads him into the company of this volume; but he is an alien in this Italian society.

One of the noblest of portrait groups by one of the noblest masters—Mantegna's picture of the "Family of Lodovico Gonzaga"—has the portraits of two children at the majestic mother's knee. The girl is at play; the boy, with his father's hands on his shoulders, has extraordinary beauty of drawing and expression.

Portraits of children are found also amongst the Venetians of the great time, for in Venice the great time was late enough to give effect to so much of the pride of life as delights in portraiture, and so much of the personal love of children as desires the portraiture of sons and daughters. It is to be supposed that patriarchal love of children, such as consoled the heart of Job with latter offspring for the former destroyed in their youth, would not have thought of portraits. Some centuries of decline from such simplicity brought about the portraits painted by a little Greek artist for the tombs of Fayum in the second century, and the art of portraiture seems often

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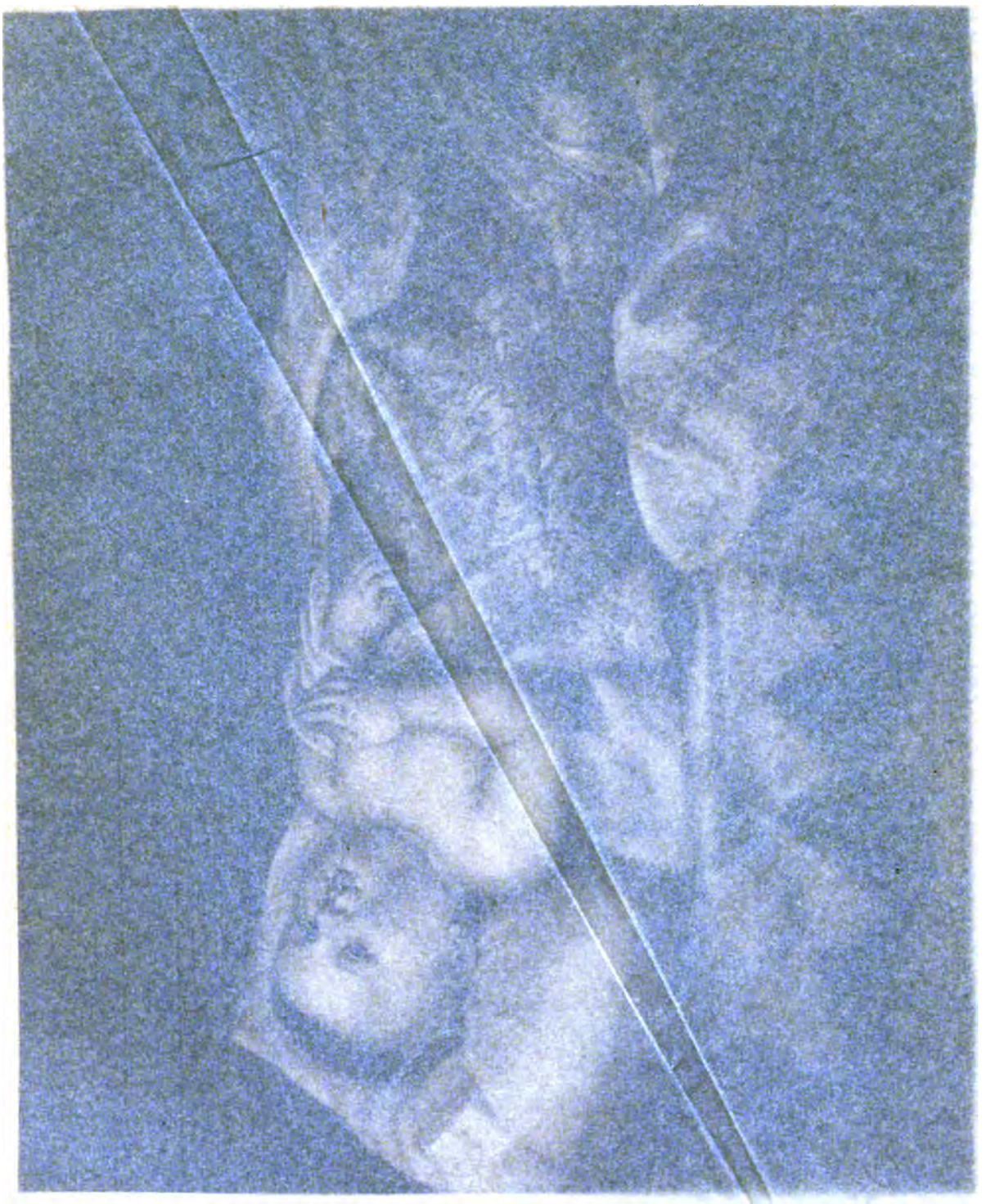

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TITIAN. CHILDREN OF CHARLES V.
(ROME)

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to comfort or flatter some phases of national decadence. (Has not nearly this been said also of music?) In Venice, in Spain, and in Holland, during the sixteenth century in the first nation and during the seventeenth century in the two following, there were great exceptions to such a rule. Titian, Velazquez, and Rembrandt were no flatterers or soothers, nor were their times poor. But Reynolds, though a great painter, painted in no great century. The truth may be simply that portraits are "late," and that late art in Rome, in Florence, and everywhere in Italy except only in Venice, is art that has lost irrecoverable things. In Venice, corruption was prevented by colour and tone. While colour lasted in its plenitude it borrowed the health of the golden sun, and the art it filled with life could not die or see corruption. That Titian, being a great portrait-painter, is a great portrait-painter of children might be held on the strength of one lovely picture only. This is the beautiful detail from the Pesaro portraits—the head in three quarters. And this is the portrait of one old enough to be treated with the dignity of the Titian quality. Titian, like Michelangiolo, was a painter of the adult, and this one young creature whose face he has drawn so finely and in whose eyes he has lodged so much power and peace, is adolescent. In the portraits, also in Venice, of the two little sons of Charles V., the master has sought to give the childish interest; but these two boys of a great Emperor, made to hold their fruits, and a real sword as a toy, so that they may look infantine, are obviously placed there as princes. Unequal in height by a bare year, they are fellow-upholders of the state of a court. Doubtless the technical critic would find the minimum of Titian's beauty in this group, as also in the portrait of

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the little daughter of Roberto Strozzi, at Berlin. Here is that rare subject of art, an infant girl, and Roberto Strozzi had wished to have his girl painted in her simplicity. The child is not on courtly duty, nor clothed like a duchess; her hair is short and undressed, her ornaments are simple, and she has her dog.

Titian's pupils, moreover, painted the portraits of children, amongst them Paris Bordone, who leaves us the delightful picture of a boy in a plumed cap, now at the Uffizi, a portrait once named; the accidents of time have stripped it of its name and title, so that the little soft-faced child, dressed with so much pretty dignity for the sitting, appears in the catalogues as a "*giovane ignoto*"—the unknown youth being about eight years old, his cheeks not yet narrowed from their childish round. An unconfessed smile, forbidden to his dark eyes, is lodged in the infantine mouth and chin. Paris Bordone was the contemporary of Titian, Tintoretto, and Palma Vecchio, and therefore belonged to the greatest time of Venetian painting; Palma Giovane and Paolo Veronese were, by a score or two of years, of a later, more artificial, and less vigorous genius. Tiburio de' Titi was employed to make the portrait of the infant Leopoldo da Modena, in the beginning of the seventeenth century, and painted the baby in the modern spirit. The little boy with his counted dimples lies cushioned and covered with embroidered silks, the hands and the feet shown as a nurse would have them.

Later than Bordone, and not so late as Tiburio de' Titi, is Baroccio, one of the many painters born at Urbino, but too modern a man to be affiliated to any local school, even when the metropolitan decay of Raphael is in question. By the time that Baroccio

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*Infant Prince Federigo.*

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PARIS BORDONE. PORTRAIT OF A BOY
(FLORENCE)

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had gained courage to place a child quite erect, quite full-face, in the charm of its own ways, and in the simplicity of childish action, art had lost much. The loss ought not to cause us to despise the gain, which is a gain of dignity and not of trivial charm. It makes for the dignity of art and of the little son of man that his likeness should be designed honestly, and without fictitious graces. Yet the noblest time of art used these fictitious graces, and the less noble time respected the noble nature. History shows us many such paradoxes; for example, music underwent irrevocable losses when she made her profoundest discoveries. Some genius of the single note vanished when harmonies were found.

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# SIENA AND UMBRIA AND OUTLYING SCHOOLS

WHEN Siena came out of the *bassi tempi*, she grew for a short time side by side with Florence. She was not Florentine, but she was Tuscan. The evolution from the Byzantine took place in the sister cities at much the same date, but with a difference. Pietro Lorenzetti, for some years probably a contemporary of Cimabue, struggled out of the bonds with a different gesture. And the dissimilarity is manifest in the wonderful figure of a child. In the painting of the Madonna, with the Infant Christ between Saint John and Saint Francis, in the lower church at Assisi, Lorenzetti shows us surely the earliest example of intent, instant expression. The Mother looks close into her Child's eyes, and Christ gives the Pontifical benediction to Saint Francis, in obedience to the Virgin's sign. The drawing is still quite arbitrary and irresponsible in such matters as the placing of the Child on the Mother's fore-arm; the little figure is vacant of weight and substance; and, though the perspective of the three faces in three quarters has been courageously attempted, the eyes have still the Byzantine length; the hands are, by the usual anomaly, altogether undramatic and inexpressive; only on the English stage can we find any hand so inexpert as in early Italian art—always excepting the extraordinary and untimely genius of the sculptors. And the whole design is as it were tied up in bands of anxious

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PIETRO LORENZETTI. MADONNA AND CHILD (Detail)
(ASSISI)

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inexperience. But, fettered as it is, the pencil is strong in its constraint. And in this one figure of the Child the great genius of expression, destined to perturb the heart of all the human arts; to strike with a tremor for a thousand weak distresses that literature which had told unshaken and unappealing the despair of Cain and the Crucifixion of the Lord; to break the voice of that music which had steadfastly sung the Good Friday liturgies; to move the arts of design from their tranquillity so as to make even of portraiture a kind of familiarity and confidence to the passer-by; to make the statue the image of the hour, and even to weaken the walls of architecture; the genius of expression, I say, seems to make nearly its first appeal in this momentous painting of a child. Pietro Lorenzetti has made the action, as well as the look, expressive. He has set aside the habit of ceremonial attitude in order to raise the child's head and to direct the speech of this energetic mouth. Amongst the many beginnings of modern art—as many as the scattered sources of one large river—here, in the prophetic painting of the Sienese master, is one.

Matteo di Giovanni, called also Matteo da Siena, is of a century and a half later, and the Bambini of his paintings have in some examples the affectation that all the Italian schools of the noblest ages shared amongst them and in a measure taught in time to Germany and Flanders. Moreover with him the "fineness" (to use the word in its strange corruption), the fineness of the "fine child," his superlatively good physical estate, is in an extreme form, as in the case of the picture in the Palazzo della Signoria, now called the Palazzo Comunale, at Siena. But, again, we find a little movement



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observed from life in the Accademia picture; the poor and puerile drawing of a work full of noble feeling yet served the painter in his desire to give something of childhood, besides fat, to the weak but thriving limbs. In another Accademia painting, in which the Child holds a string of beads, it is not only the action But the expression that has natural vitality. It is simple, and we have seen, amongst a multitude of Bambini, how rare is simplicity in the dealings of art with the figure of childhood. The naturally parted lips have evidently been watched in a living child. In this picture, too, there is a curious group of angels some ten years old, all unchildish in the artificial employment of their hands; and yet for these, four children of Siena may have been the models, for they have character, and it is doubtless in obedience to the painter's commands that one of them holds his head too much on one side.

Clear, in all these devotional and beatific groups, is the anxious preoccupation of the pencil in search as eager as a child's for beauty of face and figure. The painters of the centuries of art and religion had no other wish than to paint something beautiful; the objects of their adoration and admiration were held to possess all beauty possible to men and angels. They had no dealings with creatures imperfect and marred, or subject to the waste of accident or crime. The devils were invested with every sign of evil imaginable by the mind of man so many centuries old and Italian, and their unhandsome figures introduced into the very rare pictures that admitted them; but, apart from these, everything less than beautiful and less than innocent was banished and cast out. Until the portrait came to be more practised, when that which modern feeling holds to

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Matteo di Giovanni Pinx. Walker & Cockerell Lith. Sc.

*Virgin and Child with Angels.*
*(Accademia, Siena)*

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LUCA SIGNORELLI. THE CORONATION OF S. CECILIA (Detail)
(CITTA DI CASTELLO)

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be the best time of art—the time of the flower rather than of the fruit—had passed by in the perpetual movement of human things; until men began to desire their own storied faces and the presage of their children's faces to be secured in painting, there was not so much as the incident of personality to engage the painter; he had not the differences of the multitudes of the living to respect. He was always bent on drawing a beautiful woman and a beautiful child; secondarily beautiful angels, and next beautiful martyrs, virgins, and evangelists. Saint Joseph was to be beautiful in age and Saint Sebastian in youth. The fact that these centuries of living art were intent upon the contemplation of moral good is perhaps too manifest to capture our attention; we know the fact, and pass on; that fact would be wonderful if only it were strange, for to this habit the custom of our own age has no likeness. As steadfast as the morality was the beauty of the aspiration common to all painters during five hundred years. But the sincere spectator has to confess that the pencil, the hand, the eye, the invention did not thoroughly serve the will. Matteo di Giovanni and his contemporaries of all the schools intended to paint the most beautiful, and the prettiest, faces they could by any means achieve. For fear of loss of beauty they dared not forego anything of the prescription —the long oval for a woman's face with the arched eyebrows high above the eyeball, and for a child abundant flesh. The sense of some failure in the effect of this patient observance of the inventory of beauties has obviously discouraged a master now and then. He was far too simple to dread the name of prettiness, and he was sorry to miss it; missing it, he sought at any rate for grace.

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In the church of Santo Spirito, also in Siena, there is, attributed to Matteo Balducci, a curious Tuscan picture—it is, if he is the painter, Florentine, nevertheless it has something of the outlying provincial manner in design and in the character of his Madonna's face. The painter surrounds the seated figure, rising from the symbolical tomb, with the *mandorla* of winged angel-heads, children frankly drawn from life, with a careful variety of attitude. These little bodiless ones are a characteristically Italian version of the prophet's angels, each with six wings—"With twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly." Italian art gives this angel no feet, but crosses the lower twain of his wings under the chin, no doubt to hide the decollation; the twain that should veil the face are open and erect, for so amiable and so pretty a head is not to be covered, and the twain that fly have little to do but to carry a strange little monster, moth-like, on his fluttering way. Nothing could be less ancient and less Hebrew. The bodiless ones became a commonplace of art, and their strangeness soon disappeared in tediousness; in all dull art there is nothing duller, and the little heads flutter, a proverb for absurdity, and with the last inappropriateness, on the tombstones of the eighteenth century. One cannot easily believe that they were at any time really interesting, and yet Matteo Balducci almost persuades us that he liked them. This picture of his has, besides the six-winged heads, four entire child-angels, winged like the commonalty of heaven; two wearing the ribbons of Italian taste and running, each upon a piece of cloud; and two standing as little guards before the vacant tomb, one rather prettily alert, the other in an adult attitude of meditation which—one would think—might

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PINTURICCHIO. ST. JOHN PREACHING
(SIENA)

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strike even the simplest spectator as insincere. Saint Francis on one side and Saint Catherine of Siena on the other contemplate the mystery of the Assumption, and in the distance is an ingenious landscape of coast and winding reaches of the sea. Triviality and gravity, both of a kind alien to our thoughts, divide this design, and many a remotely Oriental composition would seem nearer to our present mind, more intelligible and interesting.

Luca Signorelli, born in another of the steep cities of the hill country of middle Italy, into which the sun looks as they go up their mountains by steps—Cortona—was one of the Sistine painters, but his best works are at Orvieto and at Città di Castello. The "Coronation of Saint Cecilia" is decorated by a number of *putti* of the conventional kind, playing with flowers which they hold with a detached little finger *en minaudant*. At any rate one of them performs this action of Italian elegance—the dancing-master again! —but another has a fresher and truer movement as he reaches up to catch a falling rose, for the flowers are scattered by the hands of the Virgin. Her Child stands on her knee to crown Saint Cecilia, who wears roses for a wreath, as Tennyson has her, and carries her organ-pipes and her palm. Crowns like hers lie at the feet of Saint Catherine of Alexandria and Saint Elizabeth of Hungary. The expressions of these and of the episcopal and monastic Saints standing above is unequal—very sweet and still in some instances, and in others somewhat conventional, strained in the manner that grows tedious with a tediousness wholly of Latin race, the tediousness of habitual exaggeration. That habit — exaggeration — has relaxed the whole language of French religion, for instance; the

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French paraphrase of the Scriptures is as it were an instrument with strings so loosened as to be incapable of music or meaning. If the tense habit can do so much for a language, it may well overtax an art indifferently vigorous.

In a picture at the Poldi-Pezzoli Gallery, Milan, by the Ferrarese master Cosimo Tura, or more probably by one of his school, we have at last three boys who, though nude and symbolical, are neither the *putti* of the schools nor the angels of a sentimental Italian convention. A young maternal Charity, seated under a few white horizontal clouds, such as a tender blue May sky so often bears in Italy, holds a scroll-like scarf for the rather aimless play of two of the boys, but the third is really playing at horses with it; he prances and obviously makes a horsey noise.

And now Perugia and Urbino become central to the art of Italy. Pinturicchio, Perugino, and Raphael rule the time, and the time is a great one. Perugino may not be to us all that criticism held him to be in the time of reaction against the love of the Carracci—who were the greatest (as well as the latest) of all the Italians, in the grotesque opinion of Horace Walpole. On its way back to the older Florentines, the taste of the dilettante paused upon Pietro Perugino as on a master comparatively early, tender, spiritual, and candid. It was a higher thing to admire the recollected and feminine attitude of a saint of his under a blue sky than the muscular action of a saint of Guercino's against a convention of cloud; and the little tree of the Umbrian background than the gloomy Neapolitan's twisted forests. And with this master of Raphael is Raphael's father, Giovanni Santi, contemporaries together, and heralds and forerunners of the painter

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PINTURICCHIO THE CHILD JESUS AND THE LITTLE ST. JOHN (Detail)
(SIENA)

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whom nearly all men love to praise. In relation to children Giovanni Santi seems to be memorable chiefly by reason of a little girl, a daughter of donors, set on her knees in front of her father and mother to offer her devotions to the Bambino of a pale Madonna—a Bambino having nothing remarkable, granted the time and school. But this little girl in her close cap, who is evidently there because the pair behind her have no son, is purely childlike, and kneels, like a child, on both knees, simple and erect, her hands before her and the soles of her feet behind her, under her little sombre petticoat. Santi's angels are much like those of Balducci, if Balducci it be—winged heads of veritable children making a crown. Their roundness is here in contrast with the worn and patient Saints, a wrinkled Saint Francis of Assisi showing his transfixed hands, Saint John the Baptist hollow-cheeked, Saint John the Evangelist in extreme old age (we must suppose that the donor's name is John, like the painter's); and Saint Sebastian only of the four is young, and his whole body is pierced with arrows. Of Perugino's many Bambini none has more sweetness than the Child whom a young angel has placed on a cushion so that the Virgin's hands, released from their burden, might be folded. To some charming angel, almost feminine in action, many a master has given this office, making of the heavenly youth a little nurse for a time, so that the maternal knees, all day long the throne of Christ, may be bent and press the earth like those of all mankind. The Child here has the beauty of a direct look, meeting the Virgin's eyes, and his hands have the action of a child; hardly so the boy Saint John with his light cross against his shoulder, daintily kneeling upon one knee.

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It would be hard if in Pinturicchio's gaiety the children of his pictures had not their part. And there is actually something cheerful in the two figures of Christ and Saint John (in the Siena Accademia), the one in a patterned vestment, the other in his camel's hair, both with their feet curiously laced. The attitudes are arbitrary and not infantine, but there is a smile closed within the face, and especially within the mouth, of each. In the Città di Castello picture, the young Saint John has something recalling the sprightly look of a San Giovannino of Filippo or Filippino Lippi, but at some distance. Pinturicchio's gaiety is not quite Florentine; the gentler city had, if not the lighter heart, the lighter wit, and the Tuscan smile is more intelligent. Pinturicchio's is rather a doll-like Bambino in this beautiful picture, small-headed, but the expression is tender, much more explicitly and intelligibly tender than is usual in this age. The young Saint John takes here the benediction of his Lamb.

The same Saint John, grown a man, preaches to a little boy, in the Siena Cathedral. Pinturicchio, repeating yet once more the ever-unintelligible failure of the fifteenth-century Italian to make any Saint do what he himself could not but do—give his hands vivacity to carry a meaning—can think of nothing better than that poor ineptitude of gesture I have already mentioned; his Baptist convinces the audience before him, including the little boy, by counting his reasonings and proofs on his left fingers with his right. See how unable are also the other hands, and how ineloquent; a young man lifts one hand in the gesture wherewith the whole art of Italy wearies us, and the boy crosses his two hands over his breast, not child-wise. But there is an unwonted thought in the placing of this little auditor

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PERUGINO. MADONNA AND CHILD WITH THE LITTLE ST. JOHN

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in the forefront, for he is not a saint by name, but only a very good Umbrian. In the minds of English people, doubtless the most conspicuous Pinturicchio child-Christ is the curled one standing by the prettiest of Madonnas on a carpeted parapet, in the National Gallery picture. The prettiest she is, with each eye larger than her mouth, and the Child stands with a kind of Perugino salience of the hip. His little features are gathered close together under a vast forehead. But in these two faces, so conventional and rigid in their beauty, the genius of Pinturicchio and the habit of feeling of the fifteenth century have placed sanctity and a remote tranquillity.

As for Mantegna, few infants of his have become the darlings of the Galleries, but there is something memorable in the slightest of his designs. The Madonna of one of his drawings, whose long mantle comes into the foreground with something Flemish in its angular folds, has laid her Son upon the end of this garment spread upon the ground. He is the youngest and most helpless of the Children of the Masters, but Mantegna's grave hand has moulded with power the powerless bent limbs and closed hands of the new-born. There is a suggestion of the North in this figure as well as in the drapery.



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# RAPHAEL AND AFTER

IT is the Raphael of children, and not the whole Raphael, that is in question here; and any temerity of opinion whereto these pages may bear witness will for that cause be more easily forgiven. The master whose name is tender and august, sweet and venerable, in the ears of generations in all Europe, added this or that to the arts of arrangement and design, but he rather continued and fulfilled than renewed the painting of childhood; he certainly did not invent the grace we call Raphaelesque, for we have seen this misunderstanding and misconception of childhood persist, before his date, in all the schools of the peninsula; we have had it by rote, and the formula is known. In Santa Maria della Pace, in Rome, Raphael has some loves or angels, part of the fresco of the four Sibyls, figures nobly composed as design, but far less than noble or natural as studies of children. One, in particular, may be taken as the representative of the whole convention, and this is his attitude: he kneels upon one knee, and the other corpulent leg is bent, and its foot turned out excessively; the body is twisted from the hip so that—as De Musset's dancing-master danced—it should contradict the turn of the foot, and it is also bent abruptly at the waist; and this twist is wrenched aside again by the turn of the head and neck; there are five zigzags, or perhaps one

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ANDREA MANTEGNA. CHERUBS (Detail)

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should say three zigs and two zags; and all this elegance performed by a babe for whom those pranks were never intended, for whose shape they are unfitted, whose mind could not grasp them, whose spirit they do not express, whose simplicity they violate, and for whose own honest graces they prove the painter inventing them to have neither heart nor eye. Raphael was not that painter, he had no kind of originality in the device, he fell in with the custom, only carrying it, in this instance of the angel, somewhat farther; but his was the propaganda which is seldom the inventor's; he imposed the formula of grace upon all Europe; he declined upon Canova, upon Sir Thomas Lawrence, upon the Italian decorator, upon George IV. True distinction, such as that of Sir Joshua Reynolds—true freshness—was untouched by that sickly prescription, but nothing inferior escaped it. It was the rhetoric of the body, it depreciated attitude. Chancing lately to enter a Chinese temple in San Francisco on a great festival night, and to see a priest diligently dancing to and fro in front of the altar of his gods, I had one chief thought. The priest was, unlike the men of his crowded congregation, a majestic creature, of stature and spirit, with an oval face flanked narrowly by the long lappets of a fine headdress. He danced long and fervently, with a whole code of actions and attitudes altogether alien in our eyes and of unintelligible beauty. And the chief thought of the European stranger was this—that here was a grace in which Raphael had no part. Nothing I had ever before seen in adult public life, nothing in church, street or theatre, on platform, or on the trapeze, had been so unlike Raphael. There was nothing of Raphael in the derivation of that elegance, not even the protest

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against Raphael whereby the English pre-Raphaelites of the middle of the nineteenth century implicitly recognized, while they renounced him. The Chinese priest was all apart from Raphael, and this was the thing that struck the traveller—so long, so wide and general is the obsession of Raphael in Europe, and the dancer from beyond the East and beyond the West came thus far to prove another lineage.

Meantime, nevertheless, there was always the child at home, the Italian child and the English alike, visibly as free from Raphael as the Chinese priest. Art, the dance, and the stage might take the sickly pose, but the child's body was free. And Raphael himself saw this. He was more original when he drew children that were not, than when he designed children that were, Raphaelesque. That is, he saw for himself the grave childish glance and the huddled position of the Boy of the "Madonna della Seggiola"; here is no twist of attitude; the head is aside, indeed, but as nature turns it, and not for the sake of attitude. Moreover, this is a clasped child, not one touched at the distance, and with the unconstraining hand and the parted fingers, of Italian grace. The Madonna of this picture is the most popular of all the master's Madonnas, but she is not fine enough to resist the wearying effect of her scattered fame; her face, often repeated, grows tedious. But the Boy's head does not tire our interest and admiration. If we are weary of the picture, we know that of one part we are not so, and that the "Madonna della Seggiola" is at once a hackneyed work and a fresh.

No less beautiful, and invested in the imaginations of some spectators with greater nobility, is the Child of the Dresden "Madonna di San Sisto." He too is free from the Raphaelesque pose,

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Angel from the fresco of the four Sibyls
Santa Maria della Pace Rome

against Raphael whereby the English pre-Raphaelites of the middle of the nineteenth century implicitly recognized, while they protested him. The Chinese priest was all apart from Raphael, and [illegible] the thing that struck the traveller—so long, so wide, was [illegible] the obsession of Raphael in Europe, and the dancer from beyond the East and beyond the West came thus far to prove another [illegible].

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*Angel from the fresco of the four Sibyls*
*(Santa Maria della Pace. Rome)*

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and the childish figure bears a head forced not at all from the character of its age by its look of intellect and power. There is all the quality of a portrait in that head, with its eyelids folded down at the outer corner—a not beautiful but not ignoble irregularity wherewith the older masters would not have had the heart to roughen the features of a little Christ. For them were the long and fine corners of well-finished eyes. Raphael probably saw such severe eyelids in a living boy; and in this picture they make a detail of likeness between the Child and the most worthy of the master's Virgins. This young dark-haired woman walks all the ages and all the spaces, and in some happy hour Raphael set on her arm his single solemn Child. Only in the arbitrary and not very fortunate puff of her veil is this beautiful group marred by evident convention. But in the Saint Barbara kneeling below, in the two angels to whom she smiles, Raphael turns again to the adulterated feeling of Italy. The two *putti* have no more than a pretence of natural action—a somewhat deliberate make-believe in the raised shoulders of the one, the huddled chin and pushed-up mouth of the other. These *puttini* are intended to be at their ease, and in designing them the master has denied himself his habitual grace; none the more are they true. For beauty and extreme sweetness—mere sweetness—a foremost babe of Raphael's is that of the "Madonna del Cardellino," who with languishing looks, and the attitude of a woman, with projected hip and languid leg, caresses the bird brought to him by a laughing Saint John. And of the *putti*, none are more artificial than two in the "Madonna del Baldacchino," who are singing their parts from a scroll of music. Women's attitudes again are theirs, and women's

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looks, but the women who should practise these would be lacking in uprightness and simplicity.

See also the twist of the Bambino of the Foligno Madonna, who turns shoulders, head, pelvis, knees, and feet in as many directions in a kind of convulsion of affectation and grace; and the unchildish manner of standing of the Child in the Louvre picture; all these are Italian improvements upon a nature unwatched and neglected. The great time of art is checked in its greatness by this figure of a child mishandled. That it is not altogether a great time we know by the rebuke, always at hand, of a living child's authentic action and incomparable beauty. The pride of the sixteenth century is, in this sense, at the mercy of a photograph.

Close upon Raphael followed the painters of Parma, more fluent, softer, riper than even he. A reaction against Raphael probably strikes with still more vigour against Correggio. Yet this last-named has more of the false elegance in the woman's action, and less in the child's. The smiling mother turns her shoulders and her head, but the Bambino is often straightforward; thus Correggio tampers with the lesser simplicity. He is fond of a dainty strife between the baby and the mother, the one catching at the veil, the other checking the little hands. For the famous *putti* of Parma, with their exuberant and sentimental prettiness, few men with modern feeling can have a warm admiration. It is a surprise to find Ruskin owning a rich and gay charm in these frolic children. Whether as pictures of beautiful boys and angels or as a decoration, is a company of Correggio's children in their hide and seek what we would choose for beauty and delight? Were these happy

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RAPHAEL. ANGELS, "MADONNA DI S. SISTO (Detail)
(DRESDEN)

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*Alinari*

RAPHAEL. MADONNA "WITH THE GOLDFINCH," CHRIST AND INFANT ST. JOHN
(FLORENCE)

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ends ever attained by means so conscious and so luxurious? We have learnt, rather, that something more sparing is not only more beautiful, but more joyous.

After Correggio the decline comes quickly; and the word "decline" seems to express but ill the flimsy scattering of genius. For genius grows thin, light, and cold, and wastes. Parmigiano, aiming at beauty only, should perhaps have aimed at something loftier or further in order to hit the swift and incontrollable creature. I cannot think that the composition of his, held to be most beautiful, does cause the delight that is the sanction of beauty. This is the group of eight young figures—"Amorini Scherzanti"—of the picture in the Palazzo Mancini gallery at Città di Castello. One of the eight is a youth, the others are little rounded boys; the elder is Love, and the seven play with his arrows. Nothing could be more purely a work dedicated to loveliness and pleasure; and yet there is not a figure there but has, in spite of the action, the movement, the sport of lines, an invincible dullness. It is not extravagance, it is not excitement, it is not excess, or dizziness, or delirium, that chastises habitual pleasure in art, but only dullness; and when children are made the ministers of that habit, the dullness looks the more foolish. One of the Latin races, having the dullness and keeping wit enough to name it, has the word for it—*banalité.*

Thus the figure of a child corrects and rebukes. The review of children in art seems to promise delight and indulgence, but we find in it various sentences of judgment.

In Rome, where all ornaments are cast into a certain mould, the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century taste held upright things in

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so much dislike that the straightest thing in the world, the chasuble of a priest, must be caught in a gale, so that it should flutter with folds like the scarf of a woman. A hurricane would hardly suffice, in fact, to set flying this rigid Romanesque vestment, but there is no sculpture where Bernini lets it hang plainly in the attitude for which it was made. The inappropriate flight is much like the forbidding of the Italian urchin to stand upon two simple and equal feet.

The word "after" has doubtless more significance when it waits upon the name of Raphael than in any other of the conditions of the history of art. To follow Raphael is to follow that which, in certain aspects great, in certain qualities nobly ideal, in certain examples incorrupt, was yet in a greater number manifestly and explicitly corruptible.

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*Angel playing the Flute.*

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had no part in the greatest inspiration, held it while it lasted, then remembered it later remembered that they had remembered it, and then lost it, leaving of their widowhead," regret, and, having it, grew fat and cheerful, Venice received two inspirations. The first was in the days of the Bellinis, and the second after fifty and more years, when, with the birth of Titian, colour and tone, in a new sense, and as a new gift to the Occident, began to warm our world. As the earlier date, so at the later, Venice was original. No other painter of his time was original as was Giovanni Bellini. But more



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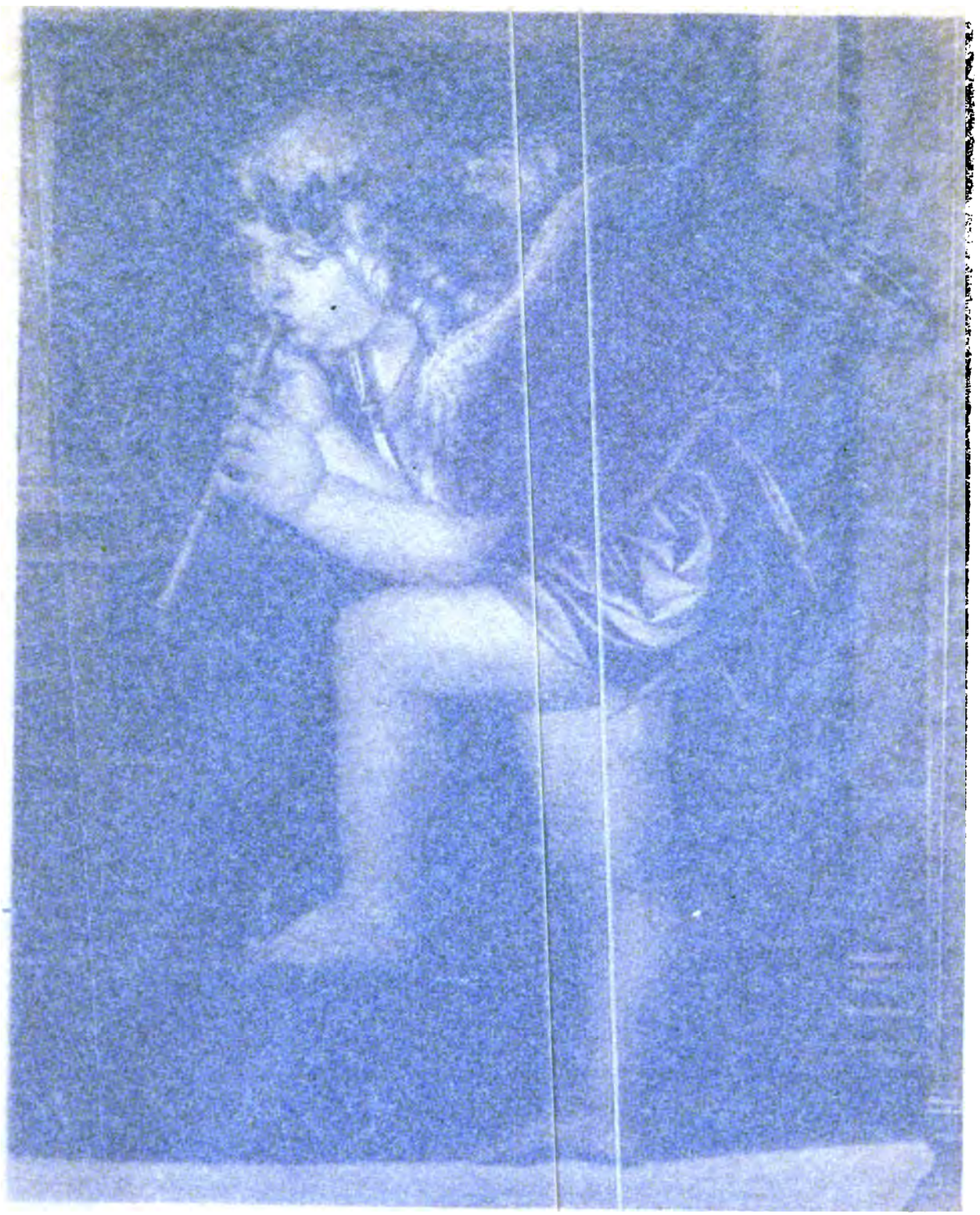

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# THE VENETIANS

VENICE is not "after" Raphael. Her school is the only school of Italy that bears to him no such reference. Its date, though later, has none of the indignity of that sequence. It is true that the natural and inevitable derivation, the heredity as well as the inheritance, from the whole national past, helped the genius of the place, the genius of the East, and the genius of the transalpine North, to make the Venetian art; but Venice had no part in the general rhythm, the rise and fall. She kept her own time and walked at her own speed. As her Tintoretto is not "after" Raphael, her Gentile Bellini is not a pre-Raphaelite.

Moreover, she has this singular favour: that whereas other cities had one inspiration, held it while it lasted, then remembered it, later remembered that they had remembered it, and then lost even this "darling of their widowhead," regret, and, lacking it, grew fat and cheerful, Venice received two inspirations. The first was in the time of the Bellinis, and the second after fifty and more years, when, with the birth of Titian, colour and tone, in a new sense, and as a new gift to the Occident, began to warm our world. At the earlier date, as at the later, Venice was original. No other master of his time was original as was Giovanni Bellini. But more



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wonderful is the originality and illustrious novelty of the late masters of Venice, contemporaries of the decadent painters of every other city of Italy, from Naples to the Alps; and it is to the present purpose that we should find the signs of this fresh and imperial source of life in the painting of childhood.

Giovanni Bellini's children are unlike those of the Tuscan and the Roman; if, in his design, he does not attempt to transcend nature, neither does he see her amiss, or force her. The Divine Child is studied from the poor infant in the arms of the Venetian woman. She is made graver and more beautiful than life, arbitrarily beautiful with her long features, long eyebrows, and full yet delicate cheeks; but the Child is made simply natural, and less beautiful than pathetic. Pathos had hardly entered into the Florentine idea of the infancy of Christ, but it is seldom absent from the Venetian. And this is not said on account of the art of Giovanni Bellini only; the most pathetic child in our National Gallery is another Venetian's —the sleeping Child whose heavy little chin is propped upon the Mother's arm in Crivelli's great gilded and inlaid picture, in three stages, of the "Virgin and Child with Saints." In the midst of the "bearded councillors of God," flanked by pontiffs, doctors, and virgins, on the knees of the woman who was clothed with the sun, lifted over some gold fifteenth-century altar, Crivelli sets a wearied baby, not only tired but sad with his fatigue, slipping, all unbraced, with his chin caught up; in the first months of a hard life, weak as a spent wave, light, but too heavy for his own strength, sheltered from privation and sickness by the depth of the refuge of sleep. There is not, of course, the modern appeal of expression; the mother

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GIOVANNI BELLINI. ALTAR-PIECE OF S. GIOBBE (Detail)
(VENICE)

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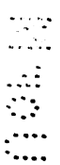

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GIOVANNI BELLINI. MADONNA AND CHILD
(MILAN)

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ALVISE VIVARINI (formerly attributed to BELLINI). ANGEL
(VENICE)

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is tranquil, and the child's face locked in peace, but the painter gives to the childish figure all the sadness possible with closed eyes.

Bellini also has the Bambino asleep, a beautiful but meagre figure of a young child with one arm dropped, and something sombre in the depth of sleep. Here is no *geste arrondi*, the grace is purely nature's, and it is lovely beyond the rivalry of artifice; I will not say of art, for an English wit has well said that affectation displeases us because it has not too much, but too little, art. Bellini has not been afraid of a straight arm and a heavy head, and his art is more, not less, than his Florentine contemporary Verrocchio's. Furthermore, one may wonder why Venice alone in Italy did not play the gossip nor boast like a nurse of the weight of the central child of pictures. Christ is tender, thin, and delicate in the designs of the Adriatic painters; never more sweet or more worn than in Giovanni Bellini's group referred to at the beginning of this volume. The tender figure is tenderly treated; the little silken rings of curls —no signs of vigour as with Botticelli or Raphael—are exquisitely drawn. And it is only when he paints an attendant angel that the master makes childhood flourish, sleeks the hair, and creases the wrist. Bellini's flute-playing winged *putto* from the Frari picture is more conventional, but he does not cease to be a child. Nor does Vivarini's, long taken for a work of Bellini, the detail of the beautiful picture in the church of the Redentore, who sings to his lute, as befits his wings, beyond his years, but has the attitude of a human child, the only attitude tolerable with limbs so fair and full. Here also is the Venetian characteristic. And doubtless it is also in that singular design of Giovanni Bellini's which is catalogued (at

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the Uffizi, Florence) by no more definite name than that of *Un' allegoria religiosa*. We see here a landscape full of caves, rocks, steps, and houses, a landscape into the depths of which the eye may follow Saints to their business or their solitudes, wayfaring with an ass or in retreat within a hollow. In the foreground is a well-paved court inclosed within a white marble balustrade, waist-high. A beautiful throne is raised to the left for the veiled and enwrapped Virgin, and at her feet kneels one of the martyr-patronesses—Catherine, Barbara, Agnes, or Lucy—with flowing hair; a humbler woman-saint, with gathered hair, stands on the other side of the throne; Saint Paul, Saint Peter, Saint Sebastian, and Saint Paul the Hermit, or some other anchorite, stand praying, whilst four children at play have these reverend eyes, and evidently the reverend thoughts, fixed upon them. They are all *putti* unwinged; one shakes a little orange-tree growing in a pot in the middle of the court, and the others catch the oranges, with charming actions, hold them, and eat them, all absorbed in their pleasure, as are their holy spectators. Saint Peter especially is intent upon them, holding up his hands to pray, and the Virgin Mother herself, praying also, seems to return to them the morning and evening prayers of childhood. There is no interpreting the allegory. The little boys are symbolical, but they are also mere boys, and not about the usual business of angels.

Also to Giovanni Bellini's noble hand do we owe the group of three young ones—children they are hardly—playing their instruments at the foot of the Madonna's chair. Such a group of three was a peculiarly Venetian gathering of the Society of the Mysteries. The ceremonial passes above—a New-Testament incident, or merely the

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GIOVANNI BELLINI. AN ALLEGORY
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CARPACCIO. "THE PRESENTATION" (Detail)
(VENICE)

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enthronement of Mother and Child; tall Saints stand at either side, and the three, a little under life-size, and of about the age of Botticelli's younger angels and Baptists, sit making music on the unequal steps. In the same Accademia with this beautiful Bellini is the more beautiful Carpaccio thus arranged, and other examples of this Venetian group of grace and gravity are in the memories of all. Carpaccio followed Bellini after some twenty years, and he evidently followed him in the convention of this trio of strings. Bellini's violinist is one of the most youthfully and freely graceful figures of Italian art—graceful with what innocence of the postures of the other schools! There is much difference between the leaning-aside of this most beautiful head and the leaning-aside of a Roman angel's. The Venetian youth has a masculine rectitude; and with this a glance of genius, candid and grave. Where, in Florence, are such simple eyes? If he were more a child this would be the place to pause longer upon their significance, and upon the heedless beauty of the soft and spreading hair.

But between Bellini's date and Carpaccio's comes that of Crivelli, a master of the period that was early for Venice, yet a contemporary of Mantegna at Mantua and of Verrocchio in Tuscany. Something has already been said here of Crivelli's Bambino, the sad Child over-tired. In another National Gallery picture, the famous "Annunciation," full of architecture, there is a glimpse of an inceremonial wayside child; and for once it is probably a girl. A citizen or two passes on the noble and narrow ways of the fifteenth-century city. The mystic Dove is coming upon a beam of light in at a ground-floor palace window; within, Mary kneels at prayer, and behind her are the

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flowered curtains of her bed, its coverlet and pillow, brackets with vases, pots, books, a glass bottle, a candlestick, a box, and dishes of majolica. Plants are in the window behind the bars; above the room is a magnificent loggia, and a peacock sits upon the parapet with a tail sweeping down to the architrave of the Virgin's beautiful door. Without, a street leads to an archway, and beyond lies a stepped garden inclosed by a machicolated wall. The herald of Heaven, on his knees upon the foreground pavement, has a twisted feather fastened to the jewel in his cap, a chain of gold, plumes upon his shoulder, and acanthus-leaves. The young Emidius, Bishop and patron of Ascoli, seems to interrupt the Archangel in order to recommend to him the turretted city he holds in his hands. Far off, on the terrace of the archway, one man reads a paper to another. On some narrow palace-steps, truly a Venetian little staircase, a gentleman of the city and two monks hold a conversation. And all this takes a new animation from the childlike action of a little girl whom that conversation does not amuse, but who perceives something to be taking place in the street, and thrusts a curious head, in a cap, round the staircase balustrade, to look below. How rare, in Italian art, is such a child. Venice here has a heart for something simple, something serious as well as slight, and something other than adult and condescending. The glorious Venetian master has this heart in common with the German and the Fleming, and with that divine Dutchman whose picture in the National Gallery, "Christ blessing Children," was taken for a Rembrandt, and—whatever technical cause may have altered the attribution—was in spirit worthy of that name of names.

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TITIAN. THE GARDEN OF THE LOVES
(MADRID)

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And now the next child is Carpaccio's. That great master's work was dear to Ruskin in his later Venetian visits; in his earlier he had not seen it with that first true sight which is virtually first sight, and makes a shepherd and a Romeo of the lagging lover. When he was well aware of Carpaccio Ruskin studied his lovely work in the Schiavoni chapel, and the Saint Ursula series, described in the latest and the freshest of his writings. But there is one figure —one of three—that sits in the midst of Carpaccio's designs, and in the midst of the art of Italy, a child playing a lute, one of the chief creatures of the work of line and colour. The Presentation of Christ in the Temple is going forward above; the three boy-angels are at their music, and this one, the most simply assiduous, props his instrument upon his lifted knee, and sedulously watches over his left-hand fingering. The incomparable composition of this figure owes nothing to any arbitrary ideal of form or action, nothing to the bodily grimace in which taste had resolved that the necks of saints, women, and children, in contradistinction to donors, must, for the purposes of art, be twisted. Venice thought a child to be a touching creature, thought natural action in a child to be not lower but higher than make-believe; and when to these new and imperial perceptions and convictions, she added the new perception of colour and tone, she proved herself indeed a great and solitary power in painting. The art of Venice, in the event, turned to the light, and set the darkened head of a man against the sun and against the cloud. I think there never was a greater new act in the history of art than this facing of the sun, this contemplation of the shadow side of things. Tone, with all its mystery, as well as light with all its

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mystery, comes about by that change of the gazer's station. Did Claude "first set the sun in heaven"? Tintoretto was born nearly a century earlier than he, and Tintoretto did more than paint the sun, he implied it by the soft darkness of withdrawal or eclipse, by the half-light and the half-darkness, by the tenderness of reflected lights lodged within delicate shadows, or merely in colour by the Venetian presence of a latent gold. Carpaccio, and masters of an earlier date than his, had made the discovery of the profounder warmth of colour, or had perceived the value of that rich secret of the colours of the East. Carpaccio was—some of the Schiavoni paintings prove it—a colourist even in the great Venetian sense; but tone, in the great Venetian sense, was to be the work of Titian. In design, however, Carpaccio's minstrel angel has a beauty and spirit that Titian could not rival, something of the freshness of the flower compared with Titian's fruit, both rich and both fragrant, but differently. The Elizabethan lyric has somewhat the same relation of beauties to the lyric of the late seventeenth century—Milton's, Crashaw's, Lovelace's, or Vaughan's: peach-blossom to peach, and Carpaccio's angel to Tintoretto's.

The persons of Titian's children are those of the other masters —the Virgin's Child, the little angels, the little loves, a Ganymede, a faun or sylvan—with the addition of the portraits of princes already noted, and the more memorable addition of the little Virgin. To the humming-bird angel of the Mysteries he gives no other character than that so familiar to us in all the schools, except only that with him the frolic movement looks more sincere; needless to say, the tone is more beautiful than anything yet known in the West. The little

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TITIAN. "THE PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE (Detail)
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TINTORETTO. "THE PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE" (Detail)
(VENICE)

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angels that fly below the ascending Madonna of the "Assumption" have Titian's delicate darkness of shadows that are winged with secondary lights; if pearls had the colours of flesh, one would liken them to pearls. To the beautiful "Ganymede" in our Nationa Gallery, at one time ascribed to Titian, is now hardly accorded the certainty of a pupil's name; but we have possession of a part of an assured Titian child in the human half of the little satyr or faun who goes in the train of Dionysos. He is a satyr-urchin of the ways of the woods, an *enfant des rues* of the forest and the shore of Naxos; he drags by a string the remnants and fragments of a sacrifice, as a child going on human feet pulls a toy horse after him, happy in knowing that it follows, as a backward glance now and then assures him. He does not laugh, but has a festal gravity as he skips that is perfectly childish. He is savage, simple, and idle, and has joined the rout of the progress of the god as a boy in London follows a show. The Venetian honesty and the Venetian freshness are manifest in this strolling, trolling figure of Antiquity and the wild coast. The beauty of the head and the dark eyes is unmarred by any habitual form of prettiness. The sense of childhood is sincere. If a child—or but a half-child—is to bear a part in the journeys of the wine-god, his Silenus, his nymphs, and his leopards, with clashing cymbals and outcries, this is the childish part—to drag something with a string. A Florentine would have made the little faun playing an instrument—he would have had, at the least, to know something of the cymbals or the triangle. I think that Botticelli's *amorini* sporting with the arms and casque of the sleeping Mars show less feeling for child's-play. Titian's faun is a child of sunshine, as is



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the beautiful god leaping from his car, embrowned with summer. Is it indeed of this picture (we must not doubt it) that Keats was thinking when he made his Bacchus, journeying eastwards,

> "enough white
> For Venus' pearly bite"?

Keats was a great poet of the imagination, and would have been, with other examples and a riper life, an infinitely great poet of the imaginative and impassioned intellect. As it is, he is praised as a poet of the senses, whereas the truth is that his senses were not rich, but sickly. Of a fruit he loved the "pulp" rather than the "heartening savour"; of lips, the "pulp" again; of a woman, her "softling" hand and a "bleat"; of Bacchus his plumpness and the unsunned whiteness of his flesh.

Titian's "Garden of the Loves," or "Hill of Venus," at the Prado, is a very beautiful picture, expressing the delight, that Italy learnt from Antiquity, in an infant court of the maternal Venus. Delight is perhaps not the word, for the pleasure of the Renascence in these frolic *putti* does not reach close to the heart; it is rather a pleasure at arm's length. The babes of this rich "Garden" are not drawn very realistically, but they are not falsified, and it is natural to find in them some likeness to the children of the fishermen of the islands.

It is in his majestic painting of the "Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple" that Titian has drawn his simplest child. The picture is a great state-picture, a Venetian reading of the Apocryphal Scriptures, and an example of the Venetians' incomparable sense of the dignity of place and approach. Titian causes us to look upwards

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at his noble figures, his noble priest, and at their action, worthy to take place under the sky. Even in their modern decline and fall, Italians generally keep that sense of distant approach and room which is the most obvious part of Titian's dignities; they still know the value of a staircase, which English architects, going, as it were, with their elbows close to their sides, have never had. The Italian takes measures at a suitable distance, addresses himself, begins spaciously to draw near. But the master, having this, had also a greater and finer feeling, and his architecture serves to lift the paternal priest, the humble girl, into splendid light and sight. The legend that gives him the subject of his picture had been illustrated by the masters, but not very often or by them all. We find it in Florence, at Siena, at Padua. It is amongst the miniatures of the Homilies of James the Monk in the National Library of Paris. Giotto painted it at Padua, and shows himself embarrassed by the little girl; Taddeo Gaddi gives her great stature and a small head, an equivocal figure turning on the stairway to take leave of the world; Giovanni da Milano has a simpler child; Orcagna counts strictly the fifteen stairs of the legend; Ghirlandajo shows a young princess of fifteen in a starred mantle; Sodoma has a child, tenderly relinquished by her mother; Cima da Conegliano and Carpaccio bring the scene to Venice. But it is not one of the habitual subjects. Its legend tells (by means of a "gospel" not accepted as canonical by the Catholic Church, and, therefore, so accepted by none of the sects) of the dedication of Mary in her early girlhood to the service of the Temple of Solomon. Some traditions add the miraculous detail of her infancy, and of her climbing the steps alone though

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too young, in the ordinary course of life, to walk; of the wonder of Joachim and Anne to whom their little daughter bade farewell, turning to them from the Temple steps. Titian keeps the tradition of her going up, and he makes her go alone. But she is no infant—a little girl of seven years or more, whose beautiful hair has had time to grow. With a charming symbolism, Titian has made the nimbus, worn by other Saints around their heads, to crown her whole figure, from head to foot. This is one of the few little girls in Italian art; and the Venetian has not taken that sweet opportunity with less than the simplicity of his noble nature; he has not taken occasion for a trivially beautiful, or, as we say now, a sentimental little maiden. He has made her nothing but simple in her loveliness; she is erect, a straightforward child, and with this the whole expression of the lifted head accords. The action is perhaps somewhat of another time of life, but all else is purely childlike, and incomparably sweet.

Much like Titian's is Tintoretto's "Presentation of the Virgin," but the picture, and the figure, are less simple. It is still the most beautiful of his children, but, though somewhat more "touching," is less great and less unconscious than Titian's. It is wonderful that the two profiles, both so young and so little spoilt by posture, should yet be lifted up thus with a difference. Tintoretto's picture, none the less, is a splendid one. It has more passion, more movement, and that splendour of the shadow-view in which Tintoretto surpassed Titian. The shadow-view is the luminous view. Best of all, the Virgin's little figure going up the stair is directly against the sky and the cloud, whereas in Titian's picture the child is backed by a pillar.

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Amongst Tintoretto's children are some exquisite Bambini. The new-born Christ of his "Adoration of the Shepherds" (in the Scuola di San Rocco), unveiled in a stream of lovely light by a most beautiful Virgin, is a sincere baby; so is the Child in the strangely splendid group of Madonna and Child in the Accademia picture. We have seen the Madonna's Child in a thousand forms, and on the knees and in the arms of a Mother under a thousand forms; but Tintoretto's Virgin and Child are both different, and fresh, as are Tintoretto's "Nativity" and his most dramatic and solemn "Last Supper." He takes very literally "a new point of view," by placing his figures aloft, or his table in perspective, away, in a large room. True, Parmigiano has a Madonna and Child raised up higher than Tintoretto's, looking purely commonplace and conventional—a revelation without alarm, an insurprising vision; but Tintoretto's Virgin, against a visionary sun, sits as though no other had ever been enthroned, and holds a veritable Child, a beautiful and animated creature, looking downwards with an infantile impulse, full of liberal grace; the little head, in a Tintoretto radiance, casting a Tintoretto shadow on the shoulder and breast. Of this master's "Massacre of the Innocents" and of the many repetitions of this subject in the Italian schools, I give neither reproduction nor description. The painters made this a picture of women, in strife with the assassins, rather than of children, and the character of children or their action is hardly in question; an executioner has them by the leg, or their fragments are on the ground. But Tintoretto's picture at San Rocco—he has another at the Frari—is magnificent. With his characteristic tenderness he has drawn the little figure of a child that has crawled from the slaughter.

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The last of all the examples of Italian children in this picture-book shall be a peaceful and emblematic *puttino*. It represents Paolo Veronese, "a noble Venetian," but no equal to Tintoretto. The child has the Venetian sincerity; he is really burdened by his sheaf, and even anxious about the carriage, and is in his own rich person a sign of abundance.

Italy is said to have much sweetened and softened the children of the German, Flemish, and Dutch schools by her amiable example. She civilized the nations of children, fed them high, put an end to all crying and frowardness, sleeked them, and proclaimed a holiday in the nurseries of art. It may be so; but after this mission, she might have brought home a lesson, to make her own sweet humour more valuable. And one master of masters, Rembrandt, had nothing to learn from "*le clair génie latin.*" Velazquez studied Titian and Tintoretto; Reynolds studied Michelangiolo—where did he find the "Strawberry-Girl"? Not in such a nursery as the Sistine Chapel.

If these pages are varied—in all their delight in the children of the arts—by some disparagement of a certain number of *putti* who turn out their feet in a manner that seems but a poor improvement on the ways of Nature, no descendant exists to resent the criticism, for those children never grew up. But the little boys of the Della Robbias, of Giovanni Bellini, of Tintoretto, mortals, ideally sweet, have left their seed in "sub-celestial" Italy, and the angels of Botticelli never died.

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